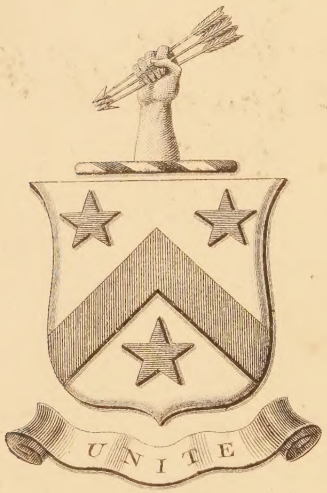

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THE DELAMERES

OF

DELAMERE COURT.

A LOVE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE DUCHESS."

"The fair may find
In this one legend, to their fame designed,
When beauty fires the blood, how love exalts the mind."
DRYDEN'S CIMON AND IPHIGENIA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE DELAMERES

OF

DELAMERE COURT.

CHAPTER I.

A SEAPORT.

"It was a wild and weather-beaten coast,
With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
Girded by shoals and rocks as by a host,
With here and there a creek whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-toss'd."

BYRON.

In the north-west of England, and at no great distance from the manufacturing districts, lies the scene of our story. The sea-coast in the neighbourhood of the locality which we are about to describe, was bold

and rocky, and extended for miles without offering shelter to the mariner or object of interest or beauty to the eye. To judge from its wild and bleak appearance from the seaboard, there was apparently no access beyond its storm-girt boundary; and, in fact, it was broken only at one point, and that in a fashion so tortuous, that none but those accustomed to thread its mazes, would have guessed at the existence of a haven within.

In the centre of the rugged barrier the land took a bend inwards, so as to form a bay of considerable extent. To the north it swept out in bold bluffs, unbroken either by inequality of elevation or varied outline. The southern coast was more picturesque. It projected not so far seaward as its northern boundary; but instead of presenting the same monotonous and flat surface, it termi-

nated towards the ocean in a lofty headland. Above, the promontory was covered with the richest turf, and for the most part rose and fell in gentle undulations, though its base, as it approached the water, assumed the same precipitous character as the rest of the coast line. Its peaked summit made it famous as a landmark, while the same quality had recommended it as a site for one of the beacons with which England lights her mariners on their nightly way.

Immediately to the north of this and at the south-east angle of the bay, was a break in the iron boundary. It was not visible from the seaward, as the sugar-loaf hill and the rocky shore, which connected it with the main land, took a curve to the south, and shut out the opening from those who were not within the bay itself and its immediate neighbourhood.

The cleft in the ocean-wall was deep, though narrow; and, like the entrance to the Havannah, amid rocks which on either side rose as perpendicularly as the bastion of a fort created by the hand of man, led into a salt-water lake, well protected from the blasts and billows of the stormy ocean outside, and of considerable size.

The security of the place, on a coast so destitute of harbours, had recommended it to the mariners of the district; and on the northern side immediately within the mouth, had sprung into existence a little town. It was of great age, boasting an antiquity even prior to the Conquest. Still its population was not numerous. In early times it appeared to have been a place of some importance, for its name was to be found amongst those of the sea-ports which were bound to provide the sovereign with a certain

number of vessels in time of war. It had been rated at two caravels or open galleys of small tonnage. With these, as it appeared from the well-preserved records, it had assisted our Edwards and our Henrys to transport their troops to their French conquests, and more especially in the invasion of Ireland, had furnished Strongbow with what was termed in the ancient parchments as "ane famous shippe." Such patriotic efforts had been attended with well merited reward; and in the time of Edward III., Delamere had been declared a royal borough, and empowered to add its mite to the collective wisdom of the legislature.

With the progress of years, however, these glories did not increase. Trade assumed new features and created new products. Birmingham and Manchester sprung into existence, and naturally sought

the nearest convenient outlet for their wares. Their combined influence swelled Liverpool from a paltry village into a great city; while the ancient haven of the north, nearly inaccessible from the mountains which enclosed it on the side of the main land, remained very much in the same state in which it had been in the days of the Plantagenets.

Under such trying circumstances it conducted itself much after the fashion of a poor genteel family. Its inhabitants, unable to boast of the glories of the present, fell back upon the dignity of the past. If the wealth of Liverpool was mentioned, they spoke boastingly of the antiquity of Delamere; and if an allusion were made to the quantity of shipping of her great rival, they replied, triumphantly, by pointing to that passage in their annals which recorded

the sailing of "the famous shippe" furnished by them to Strongbow. Indeed, by the frequency and the pride with which allusion was made to it, it was evident that the worthy citizens held it as undoubted, that to their assistance the Earl of Chester was indebted for his success, and Henry the Second for a kingdom. And that by a process of reasoning the most simple—as but for Strongbow the King of England never would have subdued the Ever Green Isle; and but for the "famous shippe" of Delamere, the Norman knight would never have succeeded in landing his archers or lances on the shores of Wexford.

This self-gratulatory process of reasoning, meritorious as the inhabitants of Delamere believed it to be, did not change facts. "The famous shippe" existed only in the records of the expedition of Strongbow.

or of a period somewhat approaching it. Its successors and representatives, apparently unconscious of the honour of belonging to the royal borough of the Plantagenets, had found their way to other havens, which offered more lucrative rewards for their services; and the trade of the little town was confined to coasting vessels, or shipping of small size, employed in the fishery. Indeed, as the success of a sea-port must depend in a great measure on the means which it possesses of drawing from the interior sufficient lading for its mercantile navy, it is probable that Delamere, debarred as it was by its locality and its mountainous neighbourhood, from much connection with the main land, would have suffered a positive collapse, had it not been for the vicinage of the Isle of Man.

In the early part of the present century

that island was still, in some respects, an independent royalty. The Dukes of Athol, the representatives through a female of the great house of Derby, had succeeded to their kingship, and exercised the rights of their ancestral sovereignty; and a pleasant sovereignty it was. There were no taxes, no excise, no customs. The royal house of the Murrays was content to derive support from the produce of its territorial possessions, and left its subjects to enjoy themselves as they best might, without stinting their pleasures by that moral curb which other governments place upon excess, by making the means of happiness extravagantly dear. The faithful vassals of the three-legged throne took the kindness as it was meant, and spent their time as if they had been the subjects of King Alcinous. Never was

such a guzzling population. At once *gourmands* and *gourmets*, their critical acquaintance with the quality, could only be equalled by their consumption of the quantity. And the passion was the more pardonable, as from the absence of duties, claret and brandy might be drank nearly as cheap as beer; and souchong could be purchased at the shops of Peeltown and Douglas almost at the same price as in Howqua's store at Canton. Such advantages were not unremarked. Gastronomic emigration became continuous, and the number of the subjects of the King of Man increased wonderfully.

But, as it chanced that a love for the good things of this life was not confined to the Mona islanders, but existed with equal strength in the less happy dominions of Great Britain and Ireland, efforts were

made to obtain, for the inhabitants of these countries, the same advantages in the way of good living, without the expense which the legitimate mode of the customs and excise imposed, and the Isle of Man became little less than a depôt for smuggled goods, which were transported, when opportunity occurred, to the neighbouring coast. Of these, the spot which was considered most favourable for the operation of the contraband trade, was Delamere and its neighbourhood. Its short distance from the Manx coast, the caves in its vicinity, the woody and broken mountain range in its rear, all gave to those employed in the trade unusual facilities for carriage and concealment; while the stormy character of the Irish sea, and the absence of harbours of refuge upon what, from the prevalence of westerly winds,

was almost always a lee shore, made the continual presence of revenue cruisers dangerous in summer, and in winter impossible.

Of the inhabitants themselves, there were the usual classes which exist in seaport towns boasting of their antiquity. The lower orders were the boatmen, the fishermen, and the seamen employed in the coasting trade; all, more or less connected with the smugglers. The shopkeepers came next; then the less wealthy inhabitants, who lived upon their means; while the *Dii Majorum Gentium* were the parson, two or three of the leading attorneys, some half dozen officers on half-pay, with twice as many old maids and widows, who were connected more or less distantly with the Norman Squirearchy in the neighbourhood, and who had selected the formal old town as a residence, partly from its cheapness, and

partly from the circumstance that their relationship to county families gave them within its precincts an aristocratic position, which would have been recognised nowhere else.

And a merry gossiping set they were. Full of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, in all matters affecting their prejudices of caste; but, when these were respected, doing kindnesses to their neighbours in a Christian fashion, and, after their means, liberal. And, in truth, there was little to awaken the less amiable feelings of their nature; for, in English country towns at the time we speak of, the degrees of rank were as distinctly marked as in Egypt in the days of Pharaoh. Society, when its distinctions are well defined, has little to ruffle it, and it rolled on smoothly at Delamere. Dinner festivities were unknown, but at no unfrequent intervals

some one or other of the inhabitants gave a tea party, after which there were generally cards for the seniors, sometimes varied by a dance for the young people. But these gaieties were for the most part confined to the towns-people themselves; for though the old ladies boasted largely of their county connexion, it appeared to be unrecognised on the other part except by an occasional yearly call. The only parties who visited beyond the confines of the borough were the rector, the surgeon, and the two leading attorneys; and they, the one from respect to his cloth, and the others from professional connexion, dined sometimes at county tables, and at what was most especially envied, the board of the great man of the neighbourhood, the lord of the manor, and the patron of the borough, Delamere, of Delamere Court.

CHAPTER II.

SOPHY DELAMERE.

"Oh, blessed with temper whose unclouded ray
Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day,
She who ne'er answers till her husband cools,
Or if she rules him, never shows she rules."

POPE.

The salt-water inlet which formed the port of the little town of Delamere was some three miles long, and, like Milford Haven upon a miniature scale, wound its way into the interior of the country, now broad and now narrow, till its extreme termination

was confined by two hills which formed the boundary of a valley.

This valley was the original patrimony of the once mighty house of Delamere.

Their family inheritance no longer retained its princely character; something had been lopped off in the wars of the Roses, while a large fine had been paid in the days of the commonwealth by the Delamere of the period—a noted malignant—for having joined the fortunes of Charles I. A sum scarce less had been flung away by his son at the court of his voluptuous successor, in buying the smiles and ministering to the extravagances of the fair Castlemaine, Mistress Nelly, Knippys, and other "such-like cattle," as they are scandalously termed by naughty, hypocritical Mr. Pepys, who, while he abused them in his manuscript, nevertheless "pleased himself mightily" in

their society. Fresh incumbrances had been added by their successors — the gentlemen of wit and honour about town, the friends of Sedley and Dorset, Halifax and Bolingbroke.

Under this complication of extravagances, the rental available for their personal use had diminished wonderfully; not so the extent of the estate—that retained nearly its original boundaries. There was one principle which seemed to be co-existent with the Delameres, and which, descending as it did from father to son through many generations, might be considered a sort of generic quality. They stuck to the land. Often in debt and often mortgaging—they never could be persuaded to sell; and the heir of Delamere Court, who, in his youth, squandered wealth with lavish indifference, spent his age in the old hall, endeavouring, by a parsimony as extravagant, to redeem former follies.

At other times, and in countries which had arrived at maturity, this disposition to perpetual borrowing, with its accompanying mortgage, must soon have come to a close; but the state of England, from Charles I. to George III., was not unfavourable to such a system. The country was in a rapid state of progression. Each year made the produce of the soil dearer, and money cheaper; and thus every generation of proprietors, through the increased value of their land, found the means of adding to the burthens imposed upon their patrimony by their predecessors. It resulted, as a consequence, that, though the funds which found their way into the pockets of the lords of Delamere, after paying the interest on their mortgages, were small, the extent of the estate was still immense; and the pride of its possessors, as a matter of course, was in proportion rather to its surface

than to the very moderate income they still continued to derive from it.

The late representation of the family at the time our story opens, had been, in all conditions, true to the follies and the avarice of his race. In early life he had played his part at Court, and at the Cocoa Tree, cheapened china with Horace Walpole, listened to the jokes of George Selwyn, said tender things to the Gunnings, and flirted with the Princess Emily. As his means diminished, he too, in his turn, went back to Delamere Court, married the daughter of a feudal baron as far descended and as poor as himself, and commenced domestic life upon what remained of his income—about a thousand a year.

The produce of the marriage was three children, two boys and a girl. The sons, as the cheapest and most aristocratic mode of providing for them, were sent into the army,

while the daughter remained at home to receive what small quantum of education her mother's limited knowledge was able to bestow.

In the meantime the lads rose rapidly in their new profession, for they had the best of interest. Mr. Delamere's only sister, some thirty years before, had been on a visit to a country-house, where also chanced to be Lord Hazelton, the son of the Duke of Acton. Miss Delamere had all the beauty of her race, and in her gait and bearing gave those undeniable signs of blood which are so perceptible in every creature thorough-bred—in women as in race horses. She won the young noble.

Lord Hazelton was an only child. His family was immensely rich. Miss Delamere's want of dowry formed no objection to the match: her genealogical tree could claim at

least equality with that of the more fortunate but not more ancient heir of the strawberry leaf, and the young man was allowed to have his own way. In the course of years, their graces of Acton reposed in the vault of Acton Church, and the young Duchess reigned in their stead. She was warmly attached to her brother. Her husband was connected with the Government, and had influence; and, through the patronage of office, the two young Delameres received without purchase their colours in the Guards; and at three and four and twenty, according to the rapid fashion of promotion at the time, the younger held the rank of captain, the elder that of lieutenant-colonel.

So far things went well. The remaining portion of the history was not so brilliant. Both, true to their blood, had the early extravagance of their family. Gerald, the eldest,

in endeavouring to live up with his wealthier mates who held commissions in the household troops, incurred debts, and for their payment was obliged to sell his commission and exchange into a regiment of the line under orders for India. The fate of John, the younger brother, was even more disastrous. His gambling propensities had more than once been brought under the notice of the military authorities and made the subject of official censure. They were repeated, and public attention attracted to them, till at last he was privately warned that if his conduct was again brought before the Secretary of War, not even his powerful connection would be sufficient to save him.

It had never been the fashion of the Delameres to take advice, and least of all was it the fashion of John Delamere.

He repeated his offences, and the War

Office, with the dread of Junius and the North Briton before their eyes, kept their word. He was expelled the army. High born, with a pride which prevented him from entering into a laborious or mercantile profession, and with a temperament and qualities which forbade the hope of success in either, his future fate was a subject of difficulty to his relatives. His escapades in London made success at home impossible. It was decided to send him abroad. His aunt, the Duchess of Acton, out of her privy purse, supplied him with the means of going to Italy, with the intention that, as soon as he had made himself master of the language, her husband's influence should be employed in attaching him to some of our embassies in the neighbourhood of the Levant. Accordingly, John Delamere went to Naples. His new career was not destined to be more

fortunate than his old one. His hot-headed nature involved him in a quarrel, shortly after his arrival, with a young Neapolitan. They fought, and his adversary fell. The unfortunate victim of the struggle was a nobleman of high rank, and attached to the court. His family were powerful, and they demanded the death of his slayer. John Delamere's life was in danger, and he fled. What was his future fate was not known. It was whispered, indeed, that on the afternoon of the day of the duel, a Turkish galliot had gone out of the harbour, and that John Delamere had embraced the opportunity of her departure to make his escape. Numerous inquiries were instituted through the English diplomatic establishment at Constantinople; but, as years passed on without his family learning any trace of his movements, it was believed at length that

he had fallen in some fray to which his ungovernable temper had exposed him, among a people with passions as fierce as his own.

But we must return to Gerald Delamere. He had reached India with his regiment. It was at the most troublesome period of the history of the peninsula. As yet the native princes were powerful in the north. The Mogul still sat upon a throne, which though weakened by intestine dissensions looked even in its decay formidable from the recollection of former glories. To the west, the Mahrattas were collecting into one combined force their many headed cavalry. To the south, Hyder Ali had reared an empire upon the mountain ranges which divide the Coromandel coast from the Malabar, and threatened alike Madras and Bombay; while French, and Dutch, and English, were alternately deposing or forming alliances with

the native sovereigns as suited their interest or ambition. It was the scene upon which Clive, and Dupleix, and Lally Tollendal, had made themselves famous, and from which they had scarce disappeared; and it was precisely the scene which was calculated to call forth beneficially the mental and bodily powers of a young man whose monotonous life in St. James Street had exposed him to evil, not so much from any natural tendency towards vice as from a want of employment for his superabundant energies. Amid such a scene Gerald Delamere rose rapidly. He became, first brigadier, then major-general; and his deeds at the head of independent bodies of troops were, on more than one occasion, rewarded by the thanks of Parliament, and the more substantial gratitude of the little corporate sovereigns of Leadenhall Street.

At that time English women were rare in India. The changeable fortunes of the struggle in the peninsula, which, though carried on under the names of native princes, was in fact maintained by the soldiery and wealth of the two inveterate rivals, France and England, had as yet, not even in those who affected to be most wise in political augury, suggested any anticipation of the peaceful possession of the eastern hemisphere, which was in a few years to be conceded to Great Britain. We were still held as wayfarers rather than sojourners in the land; and the hope of a young woman forming a permanent abode there, to say the least of it, seemed doubtful. Few spinsters accordingly, found their way to Hindostan.

It so chanced, however, that a civilian connected with the establishment of Fort

St. George, had been obliged, from bad health, to go to England. At a watering-place, through whose aid he was endeavouring to exchange his jaundiced tint for a brighter hue, he had met two young ladies of the name of Weston. They were the daughters of a Manchester attorney, and were orphans; for father and mother were dead, and brothers and other relatives they had none. To the youngest of these, the yellow-cheeked son of Leadenhall Street offered his hand. He had been accepted; and upon her husband's restoration to health, his bride had followed him to Madras; and thither her sister, unwilling to separate herself from the only relation she had on earth, accompanied them.

They arrived at their new home during one of those lulls that occasionally took place in the political tempest. General

Delamere, who by the truce had been freed from the pressure of his military duties, chanced at the time to be at Fort St. George, and there he saw and fell in love with Sophy Weston.

It may appear strange, as it was precisely the last selection which he seemed likely to have made. Remarkably handsome, a colonel in the Guards, a nephew of the Duchess of Acton, and the representative of one of the great Norman families of England, he had had opened to him the doors of the best drawing-rooms in London, and had been brought into nightly converse with the handsomest women of the handsomest female population upon earth. He had seen them with indifference. His father had unveiled to him the ruined fortunes of the house of Delamere, and pressed on him the necessity of redeeming, by a wealthy marriage, its

diminishing glories. His aunt, equally well acquainted with the low state of the family exchequer, and equally anxious to replenish it, had invited to her mansion in Grosvenor Square some half dozen Miss Browns, Miss Smiths, and Miss Johnstones, the heiresses of successful ledgers, fleets of merchantmen, and sugar plantations in Jamaica, more productive of golden fruit than the gardens of the Hesperides, and had paired them with the young soldier at select pic-nics at Twickenham, or dinner parties in town.

The ladies themselves, not unwilling to exchange the chrysalis existence of the east for the butterfly glories of the west, and to emerge from an equality with Mrs. Alderman Tomkins into the dignity of being the niece of a Duchess, and the wife of the fashionable Colonel Delamere, of Delamere Court, did their best by nods, and becks,

and wreathed smiles, to forward so praiseworthy a *dénouement*. Gerald Delamere was invulnerable. He resisted alike the graceful Lady Janes and Lady Bettys, and the more substantial good qualities of their city rivals; and all to fall in love, at last, at a remote foreign settlement, with poor Sophy Weston.

And yet, it may be questioned if he could have made a happier choice. Sophy, though not beautiful, had one of those faces and persons which please, and yet leave us unconscious of the cause of the fascination. She was scarce above the middle size, but was well made, and somewhat inclining to be stout. Her nose slightly aquiline, her mouth rather large, her forehead fine and well chiselled, her eyes blue and laughing, her hair auburn, her skin perfect. You could not look at her without seeing

that she was a being of a gay and cheerful temper, great good sense, warm affections, first-rate health, and a strong constitution. In manner and in language she was, perhaps, somewhat brusque, for she had seen but little of society, and, being perfectly fearless, she, for the most part, spoke what she thought.

It was perhaps this feature in her character which first attracted General Delamere. He had been so much accustomed to the little inanities, the measured proprieties, the pet phrases of society, the educated expressions of horror or approbation, which not unfrequently distinguish the fairest specimens of that most conventional of Europe's womankind, the womankind of England, that the freshness of a natural character fascinated him. Upon a fortnight's acquaintance he proposed and

was accepted. He married Sophy Weston.

The match was a most happy one. In fact, he could not have selected a wife better suited to him. Gerald Delamere was energetic, but he was impressionable. With great talents and enterprise, no one could carry out a scheme better when it was clearly pointed out to him what he was to do; but he was not always equally happy in devising it. Besides, like all impressionable men, he was much under the influence of those about him. He had thus been led, by interested associates, into expenses which were above his means, and extravagances in which he took no pleasure. To such a man, a wife like Sophy Weston was a blessing. She speedily discovered the weak points of her husband's character; and, whilst she carefully veiled them from

the world, did her best to correct them. Her strong sound sense, her high principle, her warm affection, and her cheerful temper, soon made her husband devoted to her, for he felt that her every act and thought was for the promotion of his interest.

When men entertain such a consciousness, they gladly submit themselves to the rule of their wives; and Sophy, though she carefully concealed her power, used it wisely. Her first act was self-denial. She refused steadily the fine dresses, the diamonds, the jewellery, which the General pressed upon her at their marriage. She denied herself even the luxury of a waiting-maid. She put their expenses upon the most moderate footing, and, by strict economy, within two years after their marriage, paid off her husband's debts.

Acting upon the same grounds of high

principle and affection, she had followed him in all his campaigns, and submitted to their privations with a cheerfulness of manner which led the casual spectator to disbelieve in their existence.

In a limited community the good and bad qualities of individuals are speedily known, and the frank, honest heartiness of Mrs. Delamere was quickly recognized. Among the officers of her husband's corps and their families, she was considered as the universal peace-maker, and no bad feeling was long-lived if Sophy Delamere undertook to dissipate it.

The same kindliness of disposition made her friends in the little capital of Madras to which her husband's corps was attached and especially secured to her the affection of Lady Carpenter, the wife of the chief judge of the presidency. It was at their

house that she was confined of her only child, called, after his grandfather, Frank Delamere.

These early days of campaigning were the halcyon days of Sophy Delamere's life; but every picture of human existence has its shadow as well as its sunshine, and the darker portion of the landscape was now to be filled in.

Poor Gerald, at the very time when fortune seemed most likely to smile upon him, caught the jungle fever, and died in his wife's arms. Sophy Delamere was left alone in the world; for her good friends, the Carpenters, had some years before returned to England, and the young widow, in obedience to her husband's last wishes, prepared to leave a country which, foreign as it was, had been to her the scene of her greatest happiness, and to take her boy to

him who was now his nearest relative, the old man at Delamere Court.

Of his father's harsh temper, and of his extravagant prepossessions in favour of rank or wealth, Gerald had spoken often and frankly; and not unconscious how much her union with her husband had done to dissipate these favourite speculations, it was with a sick heart that Sophy Delamere put herself and child on board of ship, and prepared to conduct her boy to the old hall, which had been the home of his fathers, and which was one day to be his own.

CHAPTER III.

DELAMERE COURT.

"The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand,
Amid their tall ancestral trees,
O'er all the pleasant land!"

MRS. HEMANS.

The home to which Mrs. Delamere was bearing the young heir was one which was well entitled to the reverence and affection with which it had ever been spoken of by Gerald Delamere.

It has been already mentioned, that at the head of the Salt Lagune, the lower portion

of which formed the harbour of the little sea-port, was a valley, which, for some forty or fifty miles, drained the interior. Towards the hills the upland spread itself, in a fan-like fashion, into half a dozen little glens, each furnished with its appropriate stream, and dotted over with farm-houses and cultivated enclosures, evidently the scenes of rural labour. As they escaped from their fastnesses, the brooks gradually combined, till, at length, as they drew near to the ocean, they poured their congregated waters into one solitary river, which wound its way through the rich bottoms of the wooded valley. This was some four miles wide, but appeared narrow, for it was hemmed in on either side by lofty mountains, the offshoots of the inland main range, and which extended to the seaboard till they were lost amid the bold bluffs which formed the coast line.

The lowest three miles of the valley formed the park of Delamere Court. It extended to the top of the high ground on either side, and in its lower portion skirted for about half a mile the waters of the estuary. A dense forest clothed the hills to the summit and spread itself, but more openly, over the flat surface below.

The progress of civilization and the utilitarianism which has accompanied it, may have done some good, but it has spoiled much sylvan beauty. We have become too practical to be picturesque. We have drained our parks to the smoothness of a bowling-green, and pruned our trees till they have the tameness of a colossal shrubbery; and, with the aid of Capability Browns, and Reptons, have given a uniform character to our national landscape. It is a pity. There is no greater foe to loveliness than monotony; and

the nooks and glens of merry England, as they have approached in resemblance to each other, have lost that which was their greatest charm, because it was the most fertile source of their associations—their individuality.

Fortunately for Delamere Court its possessors were not Timons, and could not, like the Duke of Chandos, afford to have a taste. The funds of its lords were, in their earlier years, expended in the capital; while the poverty, which was the natural result of the extravagance of their youth, condemned their old age to a penurious and inactive residence in their ancestral dwelling. Thus the park at Delamere was left to be much what nature chose to make it. And she made it beautiful. Here was a knoll, whose smooth and polished surface was covered with rich and close sward; while there, and in its immediate neighbourhood, lurked some dark ra-

vine, filled with long grass, and rushes, and sedges, through which a little rill would ooze lazily, refreshing as it passed on its way to its kindred river, the yellow iris or broad-leafed lily. Here the giants of the forest, scattered rarely over the surface, would stand distant and alone, like despots, who, in their haughty solitude, brooked neither neighbourhood nor rivalry. There their smaller brethren would crowd together and form a grove, as if they were fearful of the blast, and, like animated beings, sought in numbers, security. Sometimes by the side of some swampy rill would be a mass of ragged and unhealthy looking hawthorns, whose stems and branches were covered with moss; while sometimes upon the steeper banks grew, in wild luxuriance, the hazel and the holly.

To all this scene life lent animation. The

deer would lie in herds upon the slopes, where the sun shone most kindly, or drinking singly at the river, with their long antlers laid upon their shoulders, form a subject for the pencil of a Landseer.

On a terrace, at the base of the northern range, and on its southern side, about one hundred feet above the valley, stood the mansion. It had been built in the palmy days of the Delameres, ere loyal contributions to the ruined exchequer of the first Charles, or participation in the dissipated follies of the second, had contracted within narrow limits their means of expenditure. Begun under Elizabeth, Delamere Court had been finished in the reigns of her two immediate successors, and possessed the heterogeneous character which distinguishes the edifices of the *renaissance*. The lofty tower of its centre—its gay spires—its bay windows—its stone mullions—

its quaint chimneys, marked the taste of the days of the Tudor Queen ; while the long colonnades, the portico, and its Roman arches, with their heavy and richly sculptured soffits, connected the wings with the more classic times of the Stuarts. Its interior possessed the same diversity. The oak-coated walls—the open roof of the great hall, with its descending and gilded points—the fixed wooden seats—the dais—the buttery hatches, identified them with the founder ; while the fresco paintings on the ceilings of the galleries and the state drawing-room—the panels divided by pilasters—the gilt cornices—the interstices filled up with oil paintings—the lofty chimney-pieces of Carrara marble, rich in caryatides and bacchantes, in vine leaves, and bunches of grapes,—marked the rich imagination of the Italian architect, and the Palladian era of James or of his son.

In front was a terrace some forty feet wide, and extending to about double the length of the mansion. This again was bounded by a balustrade, divided at intervals by low, square pillars, which terminated above in busts or vases. Beneath, the open stone fence was supported by a wall which descended some ten feet to the garden ; and that in its turn sunk down in a succession of grassy terraces, till it reached the level surface of the park below. With the pleasure grounds, the mansion was connected by a noble flight of steps opposite the great door of the edifice ; while on either side, elaborately carved in stone, were two stags of the size of life, which terminated respectively their line of the balustrade, and looked as if they had been the guardians of the sylvan scene. An avenue, some two miles long—which, instead of leading direct to the

mansion, swept round the garden, and exhibited to the approaching guest, as he passed, the glories of the palace he was about to visit —formed the access to the hall of the Delameres.

The great length of the building—for it exceeded three hundred feet—its numerous though irregular towers, its gilt minarets, its lofty site, for its terrace was somewhat higher than the tops of the trees in the valley below—the thick, dark frowning wood, which clothed the steep sides of the hill, which rose immediately behind it—the beautiful river, sometimes lost to view amid the groves which lined its banks, and sometimes, as in a long reach, it wound through the more open parts of the park, shining like a golden mirror beneath the rays of a summer sun—all gave to a place which combined alike the beauties of the present, and the associations

of the past, an indescribable charm, and naturally made it to its possessors and their offspring an object at once of pride and affection.

Such were the glories of the old hall, and the bright side of the picture. But it had also its shadows. For three generations the proprietors of Delamere Court had been unprovided with means to maintain the honours of their family residence, and time and neglect, unchecked by the hand of man, were beginning to make visible their inroads. The fences showed on all hands signs of disrepair—the extensive gardens were neglected, the stone balustrade had in many places become broken, the large fountain which occupied the centre of the amphitheatre, directly opposite the hall door, and at the foot of the lowest terrace, had ceased to play —and the sculptured Naiads, which formed

its accompaniments, sighed in vain for their sympathetic waters. Within the mansion the traces of decay were even more evident. From the smallness of the establishment the larger portion of the public rooms had been shut up, and the dulled gildings, the cracked walls, and occasionally the dropping plaster, made welcome an act which served to shut out from the eye of the proprietor the painful evidences of a ruined family.

The only sitting rooms in use were the dining-room and library. The former contained the family pictures of the house of Delamere. They told too its history. There was the mail-clad Baron, whom Holbein had represented as about to accompany Henry VIII. to the field of the Cloth of Gold; there, made immortal by the pencil of Van Dyck, was the loyal cavalier, who had joined Charles I. before the battle of Naseby—there

Lely had secured perpetual youth to the voluptuous charms of the blue-eyed bride of his successor—and there the present proprietor and his deceased wife stood forth, formal and decent, from the canvass of Sir Joshua.

The library was large and well furnished. —The Delameres had ever been an impulsive and imaginative family, and the imaginative are always a reading race. Its successive tenants—the companions of Sedley, of Rochester, of Halifax, of Walpole, and Beauclerc, had each carefully added to the shelves the literature of their times; and the room was the favourite abode of the grandfather of Frank Delamere; partly because it enabled him to gratify a taste which could be indulged in without expense, and partly because it awoke no painful associations. Libraries, like other chambers of a mansion, may grow old, but books in this differ from

the rest of the furniture—they do not in their age suggest the idea of decay.

It was to this mansion, with its mingled evidences of glory and of ruin, that Mrs. General Delamere and her boy were now hastening. Its sole tenant was the old man, to whose honours and embarrassments the child was heir. Mr. Delamere lived alone. His wife had been long dead. His eldest son was buried in a foreign land—his second was supposed to have fallen in some fray in the wild country to which he had betaken himself—and his daughter, who had married a parliamentary supporter of the government, lately raised to the peerage, by the title of Lord Lacy, had fixed her residence in London. She was selfish and narrow-minded; her duties tied her to the capital; and, had it been otherwise, she had no disposition to aban-

dear the gaieties of the metropolis for the purpose of occasionally sharing the monotonous existence of a country life, in a distant province, with a peevish, and what was worse, a poor old man.

Under such circumstances, the announced return of his daughter-in-law and grandchild was to old Mr Delamere no unwelcome event.

In the first instance he had been highly incensed at the marriage. That Gerald, his first-born, and the heir of so many glorious associations, should have wedded an unknown and portionless girl, was a bitter draught. Indeed, so fierce was his anger, that if John Delamere had been at home, it is not improbable the old man would have made an effort to change the line of succession, and deprive Gerald of his birthright. As it was, he announced his indig-

nation to his son, in letters penned in the most violent language. The general was fond of his wife, and, indignant at the attacks made upon her, would have given way to the fierce impulses of his race, and responded after a similar fashion. But here the good sense of Sophy Delamere stepped in; she soothed the passion of her angry husband, and by her counsels, he either took no notice of the fiery missives, or replied as became a son. A soft answer turneth away wrath, is an old adage; and the wise maxim of the king of Israel proved true here. By degrees the indignation of Mr. Delamere abated; he learned from some of his Indian friends the high estimation in which Mrs. Delamere was held at Madras, of her prudence, her economy, and affection; and the birth of a boy gave a finishing blow to his antipathies.

"It is true," said he, "that one generation has been cajoled into a bad match, ruined, undone; but here at least, is a new Delamere—a boy—one who will hand down our name, and retrieve his father's folly."

This kindly disposition to the mother of his grand-child had been further fostered by Sir Edward and Lady Carpenter. From his friend Gerald, the judge had brought the warmest letters of introduction to Delamere Court. Sir Edward was well born, well bred, an accomplished scholar, and a man of the world. There were many points of sympathy between him and Mr. Delamere, and the eulogiums which he and Lady Carpenter used to pass upon Sophy Weston, naturally had their effect on their aged neighbour. Her attention to her dying husband, duly communicated

by her zealous friends to his father's ear, softened the old man's heart; and when it was announced to him that she and her child were on their way to England, he forwarded to London a letter, begging her to make her way to Delamere Court, and to consider it as the future home of herself and her boy.

Sophy received the missive on landing, and accepted it, though not without some tremors and misgivings. In money matters she was perfectly independent. Her husband, as was sanctioned by the fashion of the time, had, after some of his successful achievements, received from the native princes, whose cause he had benefitted, pecuniary presents. They amounted to about fifteen thousand pounds. The interest of this sum was, in the estimation of his widow, sufficient, with her eco-

nomical habits, to support her respectably, and secure to Frank a first-rate education; and she felt that, living in a house of her own, she would be not only more independent, but happier, than as the inmate of one whose temper was uncertain, and whose ideas, with regard to what Frank should and should not learn, she feared would differ sadly from her own.

But Mrs. Delamere did not hesitate. She had all her life been accustomed to do what she felt she ought to do; and human conduct when it seeks duty for its sole guide, simplifies wonderfully its mode of decision, and its objects. Sophy and Frank went to Delamere Court.

CHAPTER IV.

A YOUNG HEIR.

"If I had an only son to put
To school (as God be praised that I have none),
'Tis not with Dona Inez I would shut
Him up to learn his catechism alone.
No, no; I'd send him out betimes to college,
For there it was I picked up my own knowledge."

BYRON.

It was upon a beautiful afternoon towards the end of autumn, that the post-chaise that conveyed Frank and his mother entered the park, which had so long been the residence of his family. The trees were in all their varied beauty, and the fair scene, with its

mixture of plain, and mountain, water and forest, never looked lovelier than when it presented itself for the first time to the eyes of its future master. The carriage moved rapidly up the avenue—the deer, as they passed, raising their heads lazily, and then resuming their browsing. The travellers got a glimpse of the ruined fountain, the gilt-topped iron railing, the holly-fringed alleys, and the great staircase. They passed on, rounded the pleasure grounds, turned to the right, and entered, at its far end, the terrace. All seemed of good omen. The peacocks, lazily perched on the top of the balustrades, screamed a welcome; and the sun, ere he sunk into the west, seemed to gather together his expiring rays, as if to gild with a double brightness the vanes and minarets of the old hall.

At the door they found the master of

the house waiting for them. He kissed affectionately his daughter-in-law and grandchild, and Frank and his mother were in their new home.

Sophy was happier than she anticipated. The old man had something of the Sir Charles Grandison formality about him, but he was always studiously polite, affectionate, and kind, and adopted towards his new relative, not only before the servants, but before visitors, a deference of manner which was intended to convey to both the idea that he considered her, and wished others to consider her, as the mother of his heir, and entitled to all the respect due to a Mrs. Delamere. This was pleasant enough, but it was made still more so, by her being allowed perfect independence. She was put in possession of a suite of rooms, with the information that they were appropriated to

her sole use; while the large drawing-room, which had been closed since the death of old Mrs. Delamere, was once more opened, and shone forth in all the glories of faded green velvet curtains—heavy high-backed chairs—marqueterie cabinets—old-fashioned pictures—and magnificent china. Sophy, ever ready to be contented with her position, was perfectly happy.

Nor was her host less so. In the first instance, the fine-gentleman ear of the old beau was a good deal shocked by the *brusquerie* of his daughter-in-law, and the somewhat too loud notes of her voice; while his notions of conventionality were occasionally put to the rout by her uncompromising expression of opinion with regard to right and wrong. But these minor faults were forgotten as he became acquainted with, and learned to appreciate, the more sterling

qualities of her character—her self-denial, and her passionate attachment to her dead husband and his child.

Even had poor Sophy possessed a thousand follies, I believe her father-in-law would have forgiven them all in gratitude for having bestowed upon him such a representative. Much of our affection is the result of our vanity. Mr. Delamere had been very handsome in his day, and though he chose not to confess it, had very agreeable recollections of the effect produced by the beauty of his person. Young Frank had in no degree derogated from the graces of the former Delameres. Tall for his age, robust, and yet lithy, he was his father's image, with the same chiselled forehead, laughing, bold, and somewhat haughty eye and curled lip. Often would the old man place his hand upon the lad's head, and, as he passed his

fingers through the auburn ringlets, and gazed upon the young model of health, and strength, and beauty, would fancy, by an agreeable piece of mental delusion, that he saw, reproduced before him, himself as he was in his first youth. It would have been impossible for him to be otherwise than attached to the mother of such a grandson.

There were better reasons for the affection. Since the death of his wife, the old man had lived alone; and age, when solitary, is neglected. Besides, in household matters, a female eye is ever necessary. Under Sophy's management, (for immediately on her arrival she had been placed at the head of the domestic arrangements,) the interior of Delamere Court assumed a new aspect. The rooms were better swept, the servants better ruled, the dinners—that essential

article in the category of the happiness of the male sex — better ordered. Without doors a similar reform took place. The discomfited vases were restored to their pedestals, the flower-garden cleared of its weeds, the hedges trimmed, the very pipe of the fountain mended, and the Naiads once more permitted to rejoice in their unaccustomed waters.

All this was the more easy, as the income of the General's fifteen thousand pounds nearly doubled the means of the family expenditure. Nor did Sophy's active disposition and kind heart confine themselves to the addition of mere physical comforts. Woman's companionship adds to the happiness of man's youth—it is necessary to his age. Sophy devoted herself to her new relative, after the fashion by which the old are most gratified. In the long winter

evenings, after Frank had been sent to bed, she was ever ready to read aloud to the old gentleman, to play chess with him, to give him his game of backgammon, or to listen to stories, always long and often prosy, of the days of his youth, and the former glories of the house of Delamere. All this was occasionally tiresome enough; for in her heart, Mrs. General Delamere cared nothing for politics, hated the very rattle of the dice box, and sometimes wished devoutly, that Adalbert "of the iron hand," who had carried William the Norman's banner at Hastings, and who was the hero of the family, had, together with the *preux chevaliers* who succeeded him, been, like Pharaoh and his host, drowned in the sea.

But she was too kind-hearted to allow anything of this distaste to appear in her

countenance. She read, she played, she listened with a smile. And all this had its reward. From day to day the old man became more and more attached to her; and not the less, perhaps, because he could not help contrasting her conduct with that of his own daughter. Twice every Sunday Lady Lacy, no doubt, exhibited herself in the chapel at St. James's, to the eyes of church-going royalty; but, like most people in the world, she never considered that her religion bound her to the discharge of disagreeable duties, and of these she could fancy none more disagreeable than tending a superannuated, peevish father.

About five years after Frank and his mother had been domiciled at the old hall, an event occurred which relieved Mrs. Delamere of a considerable portion of her honourably discharged, but still irksome com-

panionship. This was the French revolution. The convulsion which shook Europe to its centre, had as its first result the effect of driving from their country a large portion of the higher classes. Among the noble emigrants who were compelled to exchange a state of superabundant affluence for one of the most helpless poverty, was a Count Laval, who, connected by family ties with the Grammonts, the Rohans, and the other leading members of the French *noblesse*, became at once marked out as an aristocrat, whose rank should devote him to the *lanterne* or the guillotine. His name had accordingly been introduced into the list of the proscribed; but the affection of a servant had fortunately warned him of his intended fate, and enabled him to avoid it. He fled, and succeeded in reaching England in safety; but, in the hurry of his

escape, he had been unable to secure any funds for his maintenance; and he found himself in a strange land, obliged, like hundreds of others of his fellow nobles, to trust for precarious support to charity, or to his talents as a language master.

In early life, Mr. Delamere had spent much of his time in Paris, and had received great kindness from the then rich Count Laval. The intimacy had been continued by regular correspondence, and the old man, in learning of the flight of the *émigrés*, had made anxious inquiries as to the fate of his friend. The French nobleman, from honest pride, had left his correspondent ignorant alike of his arrival in England or his poverty; but Mr. Delamere discovered both, and insisted upon the Count taking up his residence at Delamere Court.

The ruined noble accepted the invitation,

and in a short time was hailed by all parties as a welcome guest. High bred, honourable, well-informed, with a knowledge of manners and men, obtained by a personal acquaintance with the great notabilities of Europe, his conversation teemed with a thousand anecdotes, narrated as only a Frenchman can narrate them. In his society his host forgot his age, and once more went back to the days of Louis XV., of Richelieu, of Choiseul, of Fleury. The consequence was that Mrs. Delamere was relieved of much of what had hitherto been the necessary attendance upon her relative, for the gentlemen sauntered together in the morning, and played picquet at night.

But the party most benefited by the new arrival was Frank. His education had hitherto been entrusted to the curate

of the parish, an excellent man, who, upon two hundred pounds a year, supported a wife and family; but who, as he had never edited a Greek play, had no chance of becoming an English bishop. With the arrival of Count Laval, a change came over Frank's studies. The French noble felt most grateful for the hospitality which his old friend afforded him, and, from an honourable pride, was anxious to make, as far as in him lay, compensation. Money he had none to give, but he had an intimate acquaintance with the language of his own nation, and the history of all. He asked therefore to be permitted to contribute his mite to the instruction of his friend's grandson; and he hinted, though with a delicacy intended not to ruffle English prejudices in favour of an education solely classical, that an acquaintance with the

living languages might possibly be as valuable as one with the dead. Mr. Delamere and Sophy, who construed truly the reason of the offer, made no objection, and Frank, without deserting Cæsar and Horace, began to study French.

The progress of the lad was rapid. Youth learns accentuation with facility. In a short time the young pupil understood his master, and the more easily, as Frank was, in the forenoon, his constant companion; for Count Laval, unlike his countrymen, was a great sportsman; and the boy, who had no playmates of his own age, followed him eagerly in his crusade against partridges and wildfowl, through stubble and over moor. In a short time Frank not only wrote but spoke the language, and the more correctly, as Mr. Delamere, from respect to his guest (who, like others of

his countrymen, was unable to articulate a syllable of any tongue but his own), had ordained that, at the Hall, French should be the language of the drawing-room. At the end of two years, Count Laval pronounced his pupil to be fit to be a member of the Academy.

Nor were the advantages which the boy derived from his acquaintance with the old noble limited to an acquisition of his new language. He was taught by him history; not as we teach history in England, where we consider it sufficient for a pupil's information to make him acquainted with an event and its date. Count Laval taught him something more. He instructed him not only in facts, but in their causes—that philosophy, which teaching by example, is the true path of historical knowledge. The instances which he adduced were important in themselves,

but the chief value which Frank's mind derived from the unaccustomed fashion of instruction was the habit of analysing. To the lad great events became something more than mere great events. They were the key to the follies of past misgovernment—they were the point from which he drew deductions suggestive of lessons for future wisdom.

In the meantime years rolled on. Frank was fourteen. His progress in education had been rapid, and yet his mother was not satisfied. Frank was an only child; and Mrs. Delamere feared that he would be kept at home to be coddled and ruined with false kindness, his energies destroyed, and his judgment injured, by having instilled into him, by his grandfather and the servants, extravagant ideas of his personal importance as the future representative of the house of Delamere.

Sophy loved him with all her heart; but hers was no feeble self-deceiving affection. She felt that he would be poor, and that, to restore his delapidated fortunes, it would be necessary for him to cope with others. The lad had acquired the knowledge of the closet; but Mrs. Delamere's shrewd intellect had remarked that the wise men of the closet were precisely those who did nothing in life. For success, action was necessary; and the habit of action can only be acquired in the struggle with fellow-men. The sooner, therefore, he was accustomed to that struggle, the better. The best representation of the great world, is that little world—a public school. She determined that he should go to Eton. His grandfather, as she expected, made some objections, for it was a heavy pang for him to separate himself from his young descendant; but Sophy had a duty to

perform, and she carried her point. Frank, for the first time, was separated from his mother's care: he became an Etonian.

But we must hasten forward with our story. The boy had good talents, a good tutor, and worked hard. He went with success through his course of school discipline, and was removed at its termination to Oxford, and entered at Christ Church, the family college of the Delameres. The same ardour of application which had distinguished him at Eton, attended him in his higher career; and he left the university with the distinction of being what, in collegiate language, is called "a double first," and also with the higher reputation of being a man likely to play a distinguished part in the world.

There are few things which strike one more forcibly in the university, than that

knowledge is not wisdom. The heads of the colleges—the Porsons and the Parrs—the men who edit Stephens's Thesaurus, and discover a new mode for arriving at the Differential Calculus, are precisely those who, with learning enough to write an encyclopædia, form the least accurate judgment of the character of the young generation which is rising under their eyes, or the chances of the worldly success of its individual members. To them, the most eminent of the students is he who adopts himself most readily to the monotony of college duties; who never misses chapel; is regular in his attendance at lectures; caps, with due respect, the Dons, and is well acquainted with that mass of useless knowledge which a college education confers. But if he chance to be in the habit of walking across the grass plots, driving tandem, wearing pink, giving wine parties,

or, like Sir Toby Belch and his friends, joining, in the witching hour of night, "in a catch which would draw three souls out of one weaver," they look upon him as a reprobate, for whom there is no hope either in this world or the next.

The under-graduates judge more correctly of their fellows and their fortunes. They know that those very superabundant energies which sometimes exhibit themselves in excess, are the proof of an active nature; that the world is not a lecture room, and that the knowledge to which that world offers the highest rewards may be possessed by men who never squared $a + b$, or wrote essays on the invasion of the Heracleids. They analyse, with a critical and no inaccurate eye, his manners, his person, his dress, his pluck, his powers of language, his habits of perseverance in his favourite object,

whether that object be the production of a prize poem, or the giving of a turtle dinner; and, a little world themselves, they prophesy with singular accuracy from the eminence of the present of the eminence of the future.

Tried by such a standard, Frank Delamere had left the university, bearing with him golden opinions. He was a scholar, but not a prig; and the honours of the "double first" had not prevented him from showing, occasionally, that he could go well across a country, or acquiring a character for eloquence in the debating room.

In the mean time years passed on, and Frank, from a stripling, had become a young man. Nature had taken charge of his person, and she had cast it in the best mould of the proverbially handsome Delameres. His manners had, happily for him, been formed

in a school of equal excellence. His grand aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Acton, had invariably had the boy to pass with her in London that portion of "the season" which was not occupied by his school or college terms; while the autumn months were spent agreeably in his native country, and in the houses and society of its most distinguished members.

But the years which had formed the young blossom into a promise of future excellence, had withered the full grown fruit upon its stem. Mr. Delamere had failed rapidly, and shortly after Frank had finished his collegiate career, the old man died. His latter life had, perhaps, been the happiest portion of his existence. He had, indeed, lost his friend, Count Laval for the French noble, on the passing the decree permitting the return of the emigrants, had once more

taken up his quarters in Paris: but Sophy remained. She had been to him the best of daughters. She was so still; and she once more proceeded to discharge carefully the duties which had been so long in abeyance. In her society the life of her venerable relative slipped easily away, while the career of his grandson and its distinctions were, of course, to both, the subject of constant conversation, and interest, and hope. The old man retained his senses to the last, and died as the aged, for the most part, wish to die, with a young generation of his own blood by the side of his bed. To Sophy, he bade God bless her. To Frank, the last words that he uttered were a solemn injunction never to forget he was a Delamere of Delamere, and never to have any connexion, direct or indirect, with that rascal, James Staunton.

CHAPTER V.

A GATHERING.

Go, call coach, and let a coach be called;
And let the man that calls it be the caller;
And in his calling, let him nothing call
But 'Coach, coach, coach: oh, for a coach, ye gods.'"

CHRONONHOTONTHOLOGOS.

We must now transfer the scene to the town of Delamere. It was about eight o'clock of an October evening, in the year 1802, and some ten months after the event we have chronicled at the conclusion of our last chapter. The night was dark, and the wind which had risen towards sundown, blew

hard from the south-west; and, as it rose in sudden gusts, or subsided for the moment in the half articulated shrill whistle which speaks so ominously of evil in the ear of those accustomed to sea life, it awoke many a painful thought in the breasts of the families of the fishermen and smugglers, which formed so large a portion of the population of the sea-port.

Notwithstanding, however, the violence of the gale, the buildings of the little borough felt but slightly its influence. There were sounds, indeed, over head, which marked the war of the elements, but there was nothing in the streets themselves, sheltered as they were behind the lofty bluffs that separated them from the ocean, which gave any intimation of the violence of the storm that raged outside. It was fortunate; for on this important evening Mrs. Smith the

wife of the chief solicitor of Delamere was to give a tea-party.

The house of an attorney, in a country town, is not difficult to discover. It is always a good house; generally one of the best in the place. But, besides possessing what George Robins would have called "certain pretensions," and being in the *par excellence* aristocratic quarter, it has for the most part, a character of snugness about it, which distinguishes it from the more dingy edifices on either side. Its window sashes are ever redolent of fresh white paint; its Venetian blinds ever supernaturally green, and its brass knocker is as bright as a Lord Mayor's harness on the day of his inauguration.

All these qualities had the residence of Mr. Smith. The proprietor himself was well to do in the world. He had succeeded,

and he had deserved his success. A good man of business, honest, active, and kind-hearted, he formed in his own person that *rara avis*, a popular attorney—whose professional abilities no one disputed, whose professional gains no one grudged, and whose kindliness of disposition, accompanied as it was by the good-humoured expression of a large, round, jolly, port-wine, thorough-English sort of face, seemed uncontested, even by those who, with regard to the excellent qualities of others, were more sceptical.

The popularity of the solicitor, accompanied as it was by real working qualifications, had not only secured to him a considerable portion of the business within the town, but had made him the legal adviser and agent of many of the old county families in the neighbourhood, and, amongst

others, of the Delameres of Delamere Court. The connexion with the feudal aristocrats brought with it profit: it brought also honour. In the eyes of the towns-people, Mr. Smith, who dined with Lord Preston and Delamere of Delamere, became, in some degree, imbued with the dignity of the magnates he visited. Thus Mr. Smith stood in a very enviable position. *Tros Tyriusque* he was in good odour with both—what in the days of Sir Robert Walpole would have been called—"the town and country party." By the latter, Tom Smith the solicitor was voted a devilish honest fellow. By the former, Mr. Thomas Smith, the lawyer, was looked upon as one of the *Dii Minorum Gentium*, and an invitation from his house was considered as a compliment and an honour.

In this popularity of her spouse, Mrs. Tom

Smith participated. She was properly conscious of her husband's dignity, perhaps too conscious of it, as she was sometimes disposed to put on a patronising air, and did rather bore her visitors with accounts of the fashion in which Tom had been invited to dine at Lord Preston's, and how Lord Preston had asked him to drink wine, and how Lady Preston had recommended him to taste the venison in preference to the turkey, and how the butler had whispered to him, as he handed round the *liqueurs*, that it was the old Frontignac, and that he had better not pass it, and how the plates were silver and the candlesticks gold. All this was sad folly, but it was borne with. A woman who endeavours to raise her husband's position in the world, and to consider his honours as her own, is always to society an object of respect. The narrative of Tom's glories for the moment

might be tedious; but who could feel angry with the honest, frank, good-hearted, loving little soul who spoke of them. Besides, Mrs. Smith's elder visitors found it impossible to entertain animosity against a person whose plum-cake was super-excellent, and sherry first rate; while the younger felt no jealousy of one whose gowns and caps, though of the richest materials, were always ill-made, and ill put on; and who, married herself, was ever ready to encourage the matrimonial speculations of those of her female acquaintances, who, enjoying single blessedness, seemed nevertheless wonderfully anxious to get quit of a state of happiness so super-celestial.

It was at the residence of the worthy attorney that was to take place a tea-party upon the evening in question; and, notwithstanding the storm which raged over head,

the sons and daughters of fashion, as the 'Court Journal' of Delamere would have phrased it, made their way towards the hospitable mansion.

Each locality has its own customs, and the mode of arrival varies not merely with the rank of the parties, but the quarter in which they live. In Delamere there was but one four-wheeled carriage. It might be said to belong to the town, for it was a public one, and it was employed on all occasions of mourning or festivity. But, though solitary, it endeavoured, by its capaciousness, to compensate to the burghers for its having no companion. It was called by the younger and less venerating of the population, "the old tub;" and certainly, to judge from its appearance, it might have contested antiquity with the borough, whose dignitaries it

carried; for, to use the language of antiquated deeds, it could be said, with truth of it, that it went beyond the memory of man.

In shape, it was much like a Lord Mayor's coach, the fore-wheels being very low, and the hind very high. From the framework of the carriage, instead of springs, rose four straight, massive pieces of iron, which neither possessed elasticity, nor affected it; and from loops, at the top of these, was suspended the body, by leather straps of great thickness and breadth, and whose extreme length, by their play, offered the only relief to the roughness of the roadway. In front was the coach-box without sides, and having a curve in the seat, so as to make the two ends rise higher than the centre. It was covered with what appeared originally in the days of its glory to have

been a wild beast's skin, but which having been from time to time patched, as it wore out, by other hides, which the fancy or the means of the proprietor supplied, it now exhibited what would be termed by the scientific, a polydermoid formation, which would have puzzled, as to its component parts, the secretary of the Zoological Society.

The interior of the tub was appropriated solely to the fair sex, and contained comfortably six old ladies or eight young ones. For in 1802, the fictitious additions to female beauty, now in fashion, were unknown, and women's habiliments, scanty in their number, were still more scanty in the quantity of their materials.

The motions of the unwieldy leathern conveniency, though not so rapid, were as regular as those of the chariot of the sun.

The coachman knew his customers, and the house at which the party of the evening was to take place; for two parties on the same night was a heresy unknown in Delamere. At half-past seven the vehicle started from its yard, and proceeded at once to the residence of the customers most distant from the house of entertainment. One by one did it take up its living freight, till, having completed its full cargo, it deposited them safe at the scene of festivity. Sometimes a second tour was necessary; but this was only on rare occasions, as being carried to and fro cost a shilling per head, and the larger part of the lady population, to whom the expenditure of such a sum was a matter of importance, wended their way towards the mansion where were held the gaieties of the night, wrapped up in a cloak. Their heads were covered by a black silk

hood, called a calash, distended by steel or whalebone, so as to leave untouched, and unscathed, the ringlets or cap below, and in its shape, appearance, and the working of its machinery, somewhat like the hood of a cabriolet. Their lower person was mounted upon pattens, and to assist in guiding their uncertain steps in the dark, a maid-servant preceded them bearing a lantern.

Upon the night in question, the two modes of conveyance we have enumerated, were largely in request. The old tub, strange to say, had made three separate journeys in its task of collecting the more dignified guests, and the Jehu, who conducted it, in his anxiety to show himself equal to the extraordinary mass of business thrown upon his hands, flogged his long tailed black steeds into a pace which, belonging as they did to the hearse of the borough,

and accustomed, for the most part, to move as sluggishly as Gil Perez's mule, must, if horses ever philosophised, have astonished them considerably. Under the combined influence, therefore, of their accelerated speed and the anxiety for punctuality, evidenced by those who trusted to their own powers of locomotion, the arrivals at the portal of Mr. Tom Smith were numerous and rapid; and the rat-tat-tats on the door, loud and continued enough to show, that if aristocracy distinguishes itself by the noise it makes in the world, the *petite noblesse* of Delamere did its best to cope with its mightier rivals of the metropolis.

If the bustle was great outside the mansion, to which all were bending their steps, there was not less excitement within. On ordinary occasions, a stout country girl, with cheeks as red as the ribbons on her top-knot,

opened the door, and discharged the manifold duties of housemaid and table-maid. But the present festivity was upon more than an ordinary scale of grandeur, and Mrs. Tom Smith wished to show that she was equal to it. She had secured, for the evening, the services of Mr. John Tomkins.

Mr. Tomkins was one of the celebrities of Delamere. He was a man about sixty-five years of age, and had been butler to the late Lord Preston. At his master's death, he had retired on a handsome pension, to enjoy the *otium cum dignitate* in his native town. But he had been too long occupied to be happy idle. He sighed for employment, and the little aristocrats of Delamere were ready to bestow it. On occasions of great festivities, such as that which was now taking place at the residence of Mrs. Tom Smith, it was discovered, that the petticoated

major-domo, who, upon ordinary occasions, was equal to the duties of the mansion, became confused by the numerous demands for her services. She handed sherry when asked for port; dropped in her nervousness the tray with the best tea cups; and, upon one occasion, had been unhappy enough, in withdrawing hurriedly the snuffers from the centre of the supper table, to carry along with them a cap, with a wig attached belonging to an old maid, who had, for years, been vegetating in the happy delusion, that the population of Delamere believed the ringlets which adorned her temples to be her own.

When misfortunes are great and frequent, they generally suggest a remedy. The "*grands couverts*" of Delamere were halting from the absence of an intelligence mighty enough to superintend them. In a moment of happy inspiration it was conceived that an

arrangement might be effected with Mr. John Tomkins. No one who, during life, had set out tables for nobles, and who had once arranged a banquet for a royal duke on a shooting excursion, could be better acquainted with what was requisite for festal reunions on occasions of high solemnity. The *ci-devant* butler of Preston Hall eagerly agreed to the proposal. The old man wanted an occupation to break the unaccustomed tedium of his do-nothing life, and it came in its most agreeable form.

Nor were his patronesses less anxious to obtain his services. He saved the mistress of the house a world of thought and responsibility. In past times people might have criticised the shape of a jelly or the flavouring of a whipped cream. Under the Tomkins' dynasty, criticism felt abashed and was silent. "This said the duke. That did the duke

infer." Mr. Tomkins had pronounced that jellies were always so shaped at the table of Lord Preston. Mr. Tomkins had declared that Monsieur Vol-au-vent, the *Cordon Bleu* of Preston Hall, had always flavoured his trifle with spices and nutmeg. With such evidences of orthodoxy in the dishes, the fair Amphitryon felt she could defy malice, and her bosom's lord sat lightly on its throne. Even Miss Martha Blount, who, from her aristocratic connexion, was supposed to have an instinctive knowledge of how great folks lived, and whose sneering glance at the supper table had, on former occasions, caused many an uneasy feeling in the breast of the mistress of the house, no longer awoke, by her presence, anxiety.

Mr. Tomkins was not unconscious of the benefits which his acquaintance with the doings of the aristocracy conferred on his

employers, and he exerted himself to prove that the patronage was worthily bestowed. On the great occasions in which his services were required, he invariably dressed himself in the full costume which he had worn during the memorable visit of the scion of royalty to his old master. John had been an Adonis in his youth; but, as he grew older, the *entrées* of Monsieur Vol-au-vent, and the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, had swelled him out to the size of a Falstaff. He was still however as upright as a bolt, and bore himself gallantly. His hair was powdered, and tied in a long queue behind. His face pale and small above, developed itself below in an immense double chin, which hung over a narrow white neckcloth. His shirt, of spotless hue, rejoiced in an immense frill, ornamented by a brooch; and his white waistcoat, of great length, and

double-breasted, extended in front like the disc of a balloon. His coat was blue, with yellow metal buttons, wide skirts, and large and long lappels; while his lower man was clothed in black knee-breeches and silk stockings.

Such was Mr. John Tomkins's dress of ceremony, and to say the truth, when he appeared in it, he was nothing less of the stout gentleman, and scarcely less royal looking than the prince whose honoured visit he was so fond of commemorating. And in such a costume did he stand on the evening in question at the door of Mrs. Smith, receiving the visitors with appropriate complimentary remarks, and treating old and young with a sort of easy, and at the same time not forward, familiarity, such as that with which Townshend, the celebrated thief-taker, when on duty on gala nights, at the

doors of the Opera House, or the palace of some of England's great nobles, used to address the Duchess of Devonshire and the other proudest and fairest leaders of our female aristocracy.

But we must transfer our attention from "the old tub" at the door, and the fine speeches of the *ci-devant* butler of Preston Hall, to the interior of the drawing-room of Mrs. Tom Smith.

CHAPTER VI.

A TEA PARTY.

"In Coron's bay floats many a galley light;
In Coron's lattices the lamps are bright;
For Seyd, the Pacha, holds a feast to-night."

THE CORSAIR.

THRICE had the great coach of Delamere disgorged its contents—the clatter of the pattens and the knocks at the door resounded no longer—and Mr. John Tomkins, having ceased from his labours, reposed himself by the kitchen fire, like Jupiter among the nymphs. For some half dozen blooming damsels, the attendants of the special

friends of the family had been permitted to await below the departure of their mistresses, and now employed the interval in cultivating the good opinion of the great man, and endeavouring to elicit what were the dresses, the wages, and the vails of the ladies' maids at Preston Hall.

Above, the festivities were in full progress. In the drawing-room, the younger members of the Delamere population were employed in dancing to the tunes of a fiddle, played by an old sailor, who had lost his leg in the wars, and who, retiring to his native town, endeavoured to eke out existence by becoming the Orpheus of the little community. In the smaller chamber adjoining, and which (though it generally enacted the part of a school-room) had for the night been raised to the dignity of the reception, sat the seniors—the larger

portion employed in gossip—while in the centre of the apartment, Mr. Smith, the master of the mansion, was engaged in a rubber at whist along with Mr. Toppings, Miss Martha Blount, and Mrs. Drugget.

The party had been arranged by the fair hostess, with a proper anxiety to conciliate her guests. Miss Martha Blount represented the aristocracy. She was a little shrivelled old maid, who, by dint of the closest economy, a house hardly larger than a bonnet-box, and a girl from the orphan school, to whom she paid no wages, as sole servant, but whom she always dignified with the appellation of "my maid," contrived to maintain a place in society. But if her purse was small, her pretensions were great. She was the cousin, only two generations removed, of one of the county baronets. She declared herself the name-

daughter of the celebrated friend of Pope; and, having the peerage at her finger ends, was considered an unimpeachable authority in everything connected with rank.

The other lady at the whist table was Mrs. Drugget. Ill-nature whispered that in her early days she had superintended spits and jelly shapes, or, in plainer language, had been a cook. If it were so, she retained nothing of the habiliments, at least, of her first calling; for her fingers were covered with rings, her gown was of the richest silk, her shawl real India. Nor was there any want of correspondence between the dress and the wearer. She was a tall, handsome woman, with a bold, yet frank and agreeable countenance, rosy cheeks and a saucy black eye. Her worthy spouse had originally been a grocer, and, it was alleged, had engaged secretly in the smuggling trade.

However, be the cause what it might, he had become suddenly rich, and from selling sugar by the pound, sold it in the cask. With the change in the fashion of disposing of his goods, came a change in the designation of the seller. He was no longer a grocer; he was a general merchant. So long as Mr. Drugget saw the figures on the credit side of his ledger assuming a more distinguished character, Mr. Drugget felt indifferent what society he was in, or whether he was in any society at all. Not so his fair rib. Mrs. Drugget was ambitious, and with the change in the fortunes of her lord, had made a desperate effort to force her way into the *élite* of the aristocracy of the little town. She had been long unsuccessful, and no one had opposed her pretensions, or been more indignant at the claims of the *parvenue*, than Miss Martha Blount. It

was to no purpose. Mrs. Drugget did not take her place in the counting-house beside her husband, but she knew, as well as he did, how golden opinions may be purchased. Miss Blount's violence of opposition gradually declined. By degrees she relaxed in her unwillingness to meet Mrs. Drugget, and at length declared that a person of such large fortune, and having so handsomely furnished a house, was entitled to a place in good society. It was alleged, indeed, that this sudden change in opinion, was not without substantial reasons. Hints were given that Westphalia hams, quarter chests of tea, and cases of Frontignac, bearing the label of Mrs. Drugget's compliments, had found their way to Miss Blount's residence. If it were so, the world of Delamere was not disposed to be too curious in its inquiries.

It had been in the habit, for years, of admitting the well-connected old maid's opinions as unimpeachable in all matters connected with gentility, and when she pronounced the dictum that Mrs. Drugget might be visited, the little world of Delamere eagerly adopted the permission. For what could be more delightful than to admit into their dull and poor circles, a woman whose dresses, damask window curtains, and Wilton carpets, were beyond criticism. Had other merits been required in the merchant's wife, they were not wanting. The joyous dame loved fun and frolic, and was ready, upon all occasions, to get up pic-nics and merry-makings, whose cold pies, good wines, and curious pastry, all provided at the expense of the said Mrs. Drugget, were sure to attract the gross, gorging, male part of the popu-

lation, and thus give to the fair spinsters, who formed the rest of the assemblage, an opportunity of showing off to advantage new dresses and new bonnets, which, but for such happy incidents, might have been worn unhonoured and unremarked. The management of such *fêtes* Mrs. Drugget had the tact to leave entirely to the aristocratic old maid; and thus Miss Martha, elevated to the honours of patronage without its expenses, cast honied looks upon the grocer's wife; and, except when they quarrelled—no unfrequent occurrence, for the latter had become independent upon the strength of her newly-assured social position—always spoke of her as "my dear friend Mrs. Drugget."

The fourth of the whist party was Mr. Toppings. He was a little, well-dressed man, with a round, smooth, beardless,

whiskerless face, upon which sat a perpetual simper, and which, if it exhibited little intellect, proved evidently good temper. He was a bachelor, wore a Brutus wig, might be sixty, and confessed to forty-eight. His father had been a native of Delamere, had gone to London, become a fashionable tailor, and made his fortune. With his wealth he became famous—at least in St. James's Street. His reputation reached the ears of the Prince of Wales; and as the first gentleman in Europe was then employed in search of a vestimentary artist, whose handicraft would disguise his increasing waist, Toppings, with twenty others, had been permitted to make his essay on the corporation of royalty. The coat had never been paid for, but the honour had turned Topping's brain. He became ambitious, and when, shortly after the composition of the royal

upper garment, the female Toppings presented to the world a fac-simile of the paternal pattern, her loyal spouse gave to the new arrival the aristocratic denomination of "Carlton Guelph," to commemorate alike the locality which had witnessed his honours and the hand which had bestowed them. The same respect for the dignities of life regulated the lad's education. He was sent to Eton and to the university.

The heir apparent had just taken his degree, when the worthy handler of shears and needles died. The business he left behind was a capital one, but it was impossible for a man bearing a royal denomination to descend to making breeches. Mr. Carlton Guelph sold his hereditary broad cloth and establishment to the foreman. With the product, and his father's

savings, he found himself worth twenty thousand pounds, and retired to his ancestral town of Delamere to play the great man, and be the adored of the spinster sisterhood of the community. Many were the glances thrown at him, and by none more zealously than Miss Martha Blount. But he was invulnerable; and, except that he gave a great ball to all the young ladies in the place once a year, showed no evidence of his consciousness of the charms of the fairer portion of society. He was not, however, the less courted, and upon the present occasion formed a fourth at a whist table, which Mrs. Tom Smith had decided in her own mind, contained everything that was most distinguished in Delamere.

"For first," said the little woman to herself—for she had the good feeling and good sense to think her husband a Solomon,

—"there is Tom, who knows more than all the town, and is the friend of Lord Preston. Then there is Miss Blount, who is a cousin of Sir John—and Mrs. Drugget, who, as Tom says, is rich enough to have a coach and four—and Mr. Toppings, who if his father had been ten times a tailor, must be a gentleman, for he has been to Oxford, and is a name-son of the Prince of Wales."

"And so, Mr. Smith," said Miss Blount, amid one of the pauses of the game, "you have been to Delamere Court to day. What is the news?"

"Why, Miss Blount," said the attorney, "you must know that young Mr. Delamere is come down from Loudon, and I suspect will make a gay house of it; for he has brought down a new four-in-hand coach, and four as spanking greys as I ever saw in harness."

"I doubt," said his spinster friend, leading a small diamond, "he will make the estate smoke for it. Will the rental, Mr. Smith, support this new whirligig?"

"My dear Miss Blount," said the attorney, with uplifted hands, intended to express horror—"what a question. You forget professional confidence."

The question had been unlucky to Miss Martha; for his interest in the answer had awakened curiosity in the descendant of the tailor. He turned to Mr. Smith, in expectation of the reply, and his forgotten cards exhibited to Mrs. Drugget's quick glance, that Mr. Toppings had nothing in his hand higher than a ten. So she *finessed* safely, and secured the trick with a knave.

"And if he did," said Mrs. Drugget, "natural enough."

"But very wrong," said the orthodox

Miss Martha, whose piety at the moment was enhanced by the loss of the trick. "I doubt not, that, like all the other Delameres, he will turn out very wicked."

"Pooh, pooh," said Mrs. Drugget, according to the universal rule that married dames always look with a more compassionate eye on the follies of the male sex than their unmated sisters. "Pooh, pooh; natural enough, I say again. A little wildness never did a young man any harm."

"My dear Mrs. Drugget," ejaculated the virtuous spinster, "I am positively shocked at you." And Miss Martha Blount's countenance did its best to assume an expression of vestal purity.

"Nay, you need not look so horrified. Mr. Delamere is very handsome; and I like to look at a handsome young man. So I doubt not do you, Miss Blount."

The antiquated maiden seemed as though she would have sunk under the table at such a charge.

"Oh! Mr. Toppings," said she, looking across at her partner, with a glance of the most eloquent appeal—"why do you not rush to my rescue? Why do you not protect me against such aspersions?"

"I have made none," said Mrs. Drugget. "I only said that you were, like other women, ready enough to fall in love if you had a chance."

"That can be no aspersion, Miss Blount," said the jolly-faced host, stepping in to quell the rising storm. "It would be cruel to our sex," continued he, gallantly, "to suppose that Miss Blount would always remain flinty-hearted. What do you say, Toppings? Eh?"

Mr. Toppings was too cautious to com-

mit himself in language; but he had heard much of the Prince of Wales's bow, and, as far as description enabled him, had laboured hard in front of his mirror to copy it; and he now bowed to his fair *vis-à-vis, à la* Carlton House.

Mr. Tom Smith was obliged to continue the conversation.

"No, no, Miss Blount, it won't do; and I tell you, in the name of my sex—for I see Toppings's feelings are too full for utterance," (here the name-son of royalty telegraphed a deprecatory glance at the attorney,) "it would be too painful for us to suppose that you would always remain single."

Miss Blount tittered, looked conscious, and after assuming, as well as she was able, the innocent simplicity of fifteen, ended by covering her face with her cards.

"Come, my dear madam," said the gallant lawyer, laying his hand upon the lady's left wrist, which chanced to be upon the table, and squeezing it gently; "tell us now, is there no one living, fortunate enough to be able to melt that icy heart? *Could* you not, my dear Miss Blount, fall in love?"

It was impossible to resist such an appeal. For an instant the spinster repeated the titter of consciousness and the face veiling, and then lisped forth with an accent that was intended to be captivating in its simplicity.

"I do not deny, Mr. Smith, that I have the tenderness of my sex. I do confess, that if I were to meet a being in the world supremely interesting, I might, in time, be led to feel for him a delicate preference."

"Delicate fiddlestick," said Mrs. Drugget.

Miss Blount did not condescend to remark on the observation of Mrs. Drugget, or the total absence in a grocer's wife of the means of judging of ethereal happiness, and the game went on. As for Mrs. Smith, who was in the back ground, she had surveyed the scene with undisguised delight. And when her adroit spouse poured his flattery into the ear of his spinster neighbour, and affectionately squeezed her arm, the worthy dame, in her ecstacy, summoned one of her town-gossips to her side, and pointing out her husband's gallantry, whispered in her ear—"Only look at him. If he is not making love to old Miss Blount! He is always after some nonsense or other. Well I never! If he is not squeezing her hand! It's just like Tom!"

In the mean time the calm still existed at the whist table. The conversation once

more turned on the fortunes of the house of Delamere.

"And when," said Mrs. Drugget, "are we to have here the carriage and the greys? It will do the streets of the dull old town some good to see so handsome an equipage."

"I suspect," said Miss Blount, "that it is intended to delight other eyes than ours. The young gentleman will be about to take a wife. Let me see who is there likely to suit him in the neighbourhood. The Miss Vavasours are all too young, and the Miss Shelleys all too old, and Miss Pellew is sadly plain. I know no one that will suit him."

"Well, I do," said Mrs. Drugget.

"And who may that be?"

"Miss Staunton, of Staunton Lodge."

"My dear Mrs. Drugget," said Miss

Blount, "you surely do not mean the cotton spinner's daughter?"

"My dear Miss Blount," said the grocer's dame in reply. "I do mean Miss Staunton."

"Impossible, my dearest Mrs. Drugget. Her father is only a manufacturer."

"Well, my dearest Miss Blount, what of that! With her immense fortune, she is a match for a duke."

When ladies begin to "dear" each other, they are evidently going to quarrel; and Mr. Tom Smith hurried again to pour oil upon the troubled waters.

"Come, come, fair ladies," said he. "It is a little too early to discuss a marriage between Mr. Delamere and Miss Staunton; for, to my knowledge, they have never met."

"Aye," continued Miss Blount, "and if they had met, it would make no difference. I warrant you, Miss Staunton will never

be Mrs. Delamere; for it is said, that the old gentleman, on his death-bed, left his curse upon any of his family who intermarried with a child of James Staunton's. Is not that true, Mr. Smith?"

The prudent Tom put his forefinger to his nose, winked, looked mysterious, and said in a tone, which might have a thousand meanings or none:

"Professional confidence, Miss Blount."

The discomfited spinster turned to her partner.

"What say you Mr. Toppings; have you not heard the report?"

Mr. Toppings nodded.

"Ah, you have heard it! and what do you think of it?"

The descendant of shears and thimble, thus strongly exorcised, had nothing left but to reply.

"My feelings may possibly be peculiar," said he solemnly, "but, connected as I am with the royal family, and of course with the aristocracy, I could not be expected to approve of so unequal an alliance."

"Bah!" said Mrs. Drugget, in great indignation. "The young lady is a beautiful girl; and they say her father is rich enough to floor his house with gold."

"My dear Mrs. Drugget," said the spinster, drawing herself up with an air of dignity, "you cannot, from your position, be expected to understand the delicate feelings of people of ancient family."

"Pooh, pooh," said the grocer's wife, with a face flushed crimson; "I know enough of them to know, that the best-bred dogs are occasionally glad enough to eat dirty pudding."

This too evident allusion to the quarter

chests of tea and Westphalia hams threatened so immediate an explosion, that poor Mr. Smith, seeing no other way of averting the storm, threw down his cards in an affected pet; and, amid the explanations which the well-feigned despair produced, paid to his opponents the losses of himself and his partner, and proposed immediately descending to supper. The idea was received with acclamation. The attorney himself led the way; and upon the principle upon which the proprietor of two antagonistic terriers carries one along with him, Master Tom tucked Mrs. Drugget under his arm, leaving the rest to follow as they chose.

The good cheer on the table soon put to flight the recollection of the impending squabble. The jellies were rich, the malmseys healing; and an hour and a half

after, Miss Blount, whose love for creature-comforts, at another person's expense, was notorious, made her way homewards, having as Mr. John Tomkins solemnly assured the abigails below, had three helpings of cold turkey, two of jelly, and one of *blanc mange*, and had, moreover, fortified herself against an indigestion by the aid of five glasses of sherry and three of champagne.

The power of consumption occasionally exhibited by ancient ladies is wonderful. But, in this, the fair Martha possessed a virtue beyond the most. Like the Baron Bradwardine, she could carry her liquor discreetly.

CHAPTER VII.

JAMES STAUNTON.

"I knew Anselmo. He was shrewd and prudent;—
Wisdom and cunning had their part in him:
But he was shrewish as a wayward child."

SCOTT.

AND who were the Stauntons, and what was the occasion of the antipathy with which they were considered by the deceased head of the house of Delamere?

Some sixty-five years, before the period of which we write, a child was born to a poor watchmaker in a small provincial town in the north of England. That child was James Staunton. A school had in old

times been established in the town, and was still supported by a charitable bequest. To this the children of the tradespeople were admitted without payment; and young Staunton shared the privilege. In addition to the advantages which the lad thus possessed in the way of education, he was fortunate in having an intelligent father. Old Staunton was necessarily possessed of considerable knowledge of mathematics; and as he intended his son to succeed himself in his profession, he did his best to instruct him in the sciences with which it was connected. When James Staunton was about twenty, his father died. His mother had several years previously preceded her husband to the grave; and their sole descendant was left alone in the world, for he had neither brothers, nor sisters, nor other relatives.

The young man, thus unshackled by family ties or affections, had nothing to confine him to a particular spot; and he carefully surveyed his position and his future prospects.

The little borough in which he was resident, offered him small inducement to remain there. The burghers were poor—the neighbouring gentry poor. Old Staunton had merely made a livelihood, and his son was not entitled to believe that he should be more successful.

This limited futurity did not satisfy James Staunton. He was one of those remarkable men whom the last century produced so abundantly. He had early exhausted the little learning which the foundation school could afford. He had made himself master of whatever mathematical knowledge his father possessed,

and, by reading in his leisure hours, had added considerably to the store. But all these favourable circumstances were merely adventitious; his real claims to future success depended upon his personal character. Staunton was shrewd; quick in perception, yet sound in judgment; ambitious, yet never carried away by enthusiasm; greedy in the acquisition of money, niggardly in the expenditure of it; blunt, decided, opinionative, without delicacy, without fear. In addition to all this, he had a frame of iron; and in the professional struggles of life, the physical man has as much to do with success as the moral—for the finest and loftiest intelligences are useless, unless the proprietor has the thews, and sinews, and internal strength, which enabled him to endure, unscathed, the daily and unceasing labour

of years. Parents, in their anxiety for the future, cultivate a child's intellect; but they would do better to cultivate his stomach; for it is an undoubted fact, that upon the unfailing support of that functionary, depend the most important of life's successes. There are not few of the Chancellors of England who would have made a figure in the prize ring.

With such a development, mental and bodily, and with a consciousness of power which the possession naturally produced, James Staunton felt that his native town was too limited an arena for his future career. He sold his business; but, from affection to his parents and personal associations, preserved the few tools with which it had been carried on, and, leaving his paternal home, made his way south.

At the time we speak of, the cotton

manufacture, which has now attained so stupendous a development, was in its infancy; but still an idea was afloat in the minds of many who looked beneath the surface, that it was destined to attain prodigious increase; and amongst those who entertained such an opinion, was the young watchmaker. With this belief, after several unsuccessful attempts, James Staunton obtained a clerkship in the house of a Manchester manufacturer. He was an excellent penman, and was indefatigable in the discharge of his duties. His intelligence was soon discovered; and from copying letters, he was raised to the rank of composing them. Brought by his new position into immediate contact with his chief, his clear-headed intellect soon made its weight felt. His suggestions were listened to, were followed, were successful; and within eight

years after he entered the mercantile house as a clerk, he became a partner.

The elevation was great; but Staunton's ambitious nature held it only as a step to future progress. He had hitherto exhibited his intelligence chiefly in finding new markets for the goods of the firm, and improving the fashion of disposing of them. He now entered upon a new career—that of diminishing the expense — and adding to the facility of their production. It appeared to him that much of what was effected by manual labour might be better done, and with more rapidity, through the medium of machinery. From the moment the crude idea entered into his brain, he was restless till he had attained its completion, or satisfied himself that it was impossible. But to entrust the experiment to other hands was out of the question. It

was necessary, to make his discovery valuable, that its operation should be limited by patent to his own firm. He determined, therefore, to puzzle out its machinery himself.

It was now that his watchmaker knowledge came into play. The box containing his old tools, which had nearly been forgotten, was brought from its resting place, and James Staunton once more began to polish cog wheels and calculate powers.

He was long unsuccessful, but the indomitable perseverance of the man carried him through all difficulties; and within five years after his first essay, he had effected the wished-for discovery, obtained his patent, and made the manufacturing house of Willis and Staunton one of the first in England.

Shortly after, Mr. Willis died. He was

a bachelor, and on bad terms with his relatives. Some twenty thousand pounds were left to a local charity; but the larger part of his funds was bequeathed to the partner, to whose energies he had been mainly indebted for them. James Staunton became thus a man of mark—the originator of an important discovery—the head of a great manufacturing interest — and the possessor of the funded wealth of his predecessor.

When men have a large fortune, they are seldom satisfied with the power of regulating it during their own lives. They are, for the most part, anxious to retain their interest in it beyond the grave. They wish for a second self, to whom they can communicate their riches, their ambitions, and the means of advancing them. They desire a family.

James Staunton was five-and-forty. His person was about the middle size, robust, square made, without being heavy. The features were somewhat Scotch in their character—the eyes small, deep set, light grey, but keen, piercing, determined, and shrewd — the forehead massy — the jaw large, broad, and firm, but without flesh, and with sharp, angular lines. Face and person represented accurately the man. They were neither aristocratic nor vulgar. They conveyed to the spectator the idea of him as he really was—a man who had something of the pride of purse, but still more of pride in the personal energies which had enabled him to store it well. You felt that you could not admire James Staunton; you doubted if you could respect him; but you never hesitated to confess that his qualities, whether for good or evil, were of themselves

a power, and were not to be trifled with or disregarded.

It was some six months after the death of Mr. Willis that James Staunton chanced to be in London. His immense wealth, the notoriety connected with his having been the discoverer of the new patent, and the possession of several heavy mortgages upon the estates of noble borrowers, opened to him the doors of good society. Amongst others was a Scotch Earl, whose principality was in the western highlands, and who, like other great landholders during the war, was bitten with the passion for improvement, and indulged in the agreeable hallucination, that rents were to undergo a perpetual increase at the rate of geometrical progression. It was "the season." The great Celtic chief was in town, and James Staunton dined at his house. By his noble

hostess he was presented to a young lady of five-and-twenty, and of much personal beauty. He took her down to dinner, did his best to play the agreeable, and left Sackville Street with the impression that he had never seen any one better qualified to become Mrs. James Staunton. To say that he was in love would be incorrect; but he had made up his mind that a rich man ought to marry, and that at forty-five he was quite old enough to enter into so important a partnership. He made inquiries with regard to his companion at dinner, and learned that she was a niece of his noble host, portionless, and an orphan. Satisfied with what he saw and what he heard, he made repeated visits to Lord Torrisdale's; stated to the old peer personally his intentions, was favourably listened to, proposed, and was accepted.

The marriage was a happy one. The new Mrs. Staunton was accomplished, had great good feeling and good sense; and her husband, who was conscious of his wife's merits, and was proud of her connexions, supplied her liberally with funds, and allowed her to manage the affairs of the household after her own fashion.

What, perchance, added to the felicity of the new married couple, was the husband's having no relatives of his own. Mrs. Staunton was thus enabled to keep up an unbroken correspondence with her own family; and as her establishment was on the handsomest footing, and her new wealth known to be immense, that connexion was frequent and agreeable.

The only result of the union was one daughter, the care of whose health and

whose education formed a perpetual subject of interest to her parents. Both promised to reward them for their labours. The girl grew up with all her mother's beauty, and much of her father's fearlessness, practical shrewdness, and good sense.

As she advanced to womanhood, her introduction to society became necessary. James Staunton himself, never left the desk; but as he was equally anxious with his wife for the advancement of his child, and like most men who rail against the aristocracy, had, in his secret heart, an immense respect for rank and a great liking for its attentions, he eagerly furnished Mrs. Staunton with the means of renewing her intimacy with the aristocratic acquaintance of her girlhood. A house was purchased in Grosvenor Square, splendidly furnished, and provided with a corresponding establishment; and during the

season, the heiress of the manufacturer, by the joint influence of her father's wealth and her mother's noble kindred, without entering extravagantly into London society, saw, and at no unfrequent intervals, its most distinguished members.

But while Mrs. Staunton was doing her best, after a woman's fashion, to give her daughter a distinguished position in society, her husband was endeavouring to attain the same end in another manner. He had acquired a fortune approaching to half a million sterling, and was anxious to realize it in the purchase of land. Numerous small estates were daily in the market; but these he turned from with indifference. What he wanted, was to purchase in its integrity, some great feudal principality—one which would give a man possession of a borough, and a claim to represent a county; and he

had already decided on his future property. It was Delamere Court.

Some years before, Mr. Staunton had gone with his family upon a tour round the coast, and, amongst other spots, had penetrated the mountain range, and made his way to the little town of Delamere. When there, he had been struck with the grandeur of the old hall in its neighbourhood, and during his two or three weeks' residence, had made himself acquainted with the immense extent of the nominal territory of the Delameres, and their still greater real embarrassments; and he had marked the domain as his own.

It was the very thing the manufacturer wanted. A grand place, fine timber—a rental which, if clear, would amount to twenty thousand per annum; political influence, a pocket borough, and a right, if

money were freely spent, to secure the representation of half a county. He determined to be the Lord of Delamere Court.

The plan was excellent. There was but one objection to it. The estate was not for sale; but this was but a small matter in the eyes of James Staunton. He had succeeded in everything he had undertaken, and had gained everything he had earnestly desired, and—the spoiled child of good fortune—he doubted not that his success in the future would be great as in the past, and he prepared himself accordingly to take advantage of the necessities of the proprietor, or of any contingency that might bring the estate into the market. He did more; he acted as if his hopes were a certainty, and Delamere Court already his own.

On the southern side of the estuary, at whose mouth stood the little sea-port des-

cribed in our first chapter, and in sight of the windows of the old hall, was a farm of some five hundred acres, the patrimony, for generations, of a race of yeomen farmers, who boasted an antiquity nearly as great as the descendants of Adalbert of the Iron Hand. It was surrounded on every side, except towards the water, by the Delamere estate, whose lords had always looked forward to its purchase as a favourite object. Partly, because being a prominent feature from the park, its ungainly buildings formed an eyesore, and partly because its possessors, with that English feeling of independence, which in country neighbours occasionally degenerates into a disposition to annoyance, and contradictory action, had become a perfect thorn in the sides of the great Delameres. To the lords of the old hall, the sturdy occupants of Houghton farm were what

Mordecai, at the king's gate, was to the favourite of Ahasuerus—an accursed thing—a stumbling-block in their path—a heart-sore, the continuance of which, whether well or ill founded, robbed life of its happiness. The present proprietor of Delamere was no less anxious about the purchase of the intrusive property than his predecessors. With him, as with them, it had been the favourite object of his life, and no sooner was it known that Houghton was to be disposed of, than it was decided, notwithstanding the existing embarrassments of the family, that the fifteen thousand pounds, the Indian savings of the General, should be devoted to its acquisition. As, however, the small farm was isolated, and it was understood that there would be no competitors, old Mr. Delamere delayed the purchase, with the expectation of making it on lower terms.

What then was his anger and despair, when he learned that the prize which had been within his grasp had been carried off by another. Houghton had been bought by Mr. James Staunton.

The grounds on which the cotton-spinner had acted were simple enough. He had determined on becoming the future master of Delamere, and he felt that his possession of a farm in the heart of the estate, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the park, might form a strong reason for dissuading competition in any one who might, like himself, on the greater domain coming into the market, be disposed to be its purchaser. He, too, had learned of the pecuniary difficulties of the proprietor of Houghton; and as soon as he had heard of his wish to sell, had tempted him with a price which had been eagerly accepted by the embarrassed

yeoman; partly, because the sum offered was greater than the intrinsic value of the land, but chiefly, because it prevented its falling into the hands of the hated Delameres. If the feudal magnate was indignant that his pauper neighbour would not sell, the pauper neighbour was, in his turn, not less indignant, that the feudal magnate should pertinaciously desire to wrest from him what, small as it was, was still dear to him as a family inheritance.

Old Mr. Delamere did his best to redeem the error of his delay by offering Mr. Staunton an advance upon the price. The offer was not accepted. The correspondence between the landlord and the cotton lord, each equally disposed to be overbearing in his pride of family or purse, became first cold, then warm, sharp, uncivil, rude; till at length it resulted in a fierce, open feud. In Mr. Staunton, the younger of the party and

the victor in the struggle, the bitterness of feeling was comparatively small. In Mr. Delamere, petulant alike from age and from defeat, the hatred to his more successful antagonist was intense: it visibly affected his health; and, during the three years which ensued between the purchase and his death, was the daily and favourite subject of his vituperation. As Cato used to close his speeches by the invariable *Delenda est Carthago*, so the new representative of the landed interest invariably wound up his Philippic against the new representative of the commercial, with the unchanging phrase: "And remember, Frank, never have anything to do with that rascal James Staunton."

Was Miss Martha Blount, then, much in error when she disputed the possibility of a marriage between the heir of the Delameres and the cotton-spinner's daughter?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMING MAN.

"His name is Romeo, and a Montague,
The only son of our great enemy,"

ROMEO AND JULIET.

LADY CARPENTER was the widow of one of the judges of our Indian presidencies. Her husband, like his accomplished contemporary and model, Sir William Jones, had been something more than a lawyer: he was a distinguished literary man. Indifferent to the convivial habits which so frequently mark his class, Sir Edward Carpenter had spent no small part of his official income in sur-

rounding himself with a magnificent library, and no small portion of the time which was not occupied by his professional duties in making himself acquainted with its contents.

When he had served his period of legal probation abroad, the Judge (being as he himself termed it, *emeritus*) returned to England. During his Indian residence he had formed an acquaintance with General Delamere: it had ripened into friendship, and the good feeling which had existed between the husbands had been further cemented by an affection which had rapidly sprung up between their wives. In energy of character, in strong, sound, worldly sense, Lady Carpenter was very inferior to Mrs. Delamere—nay more—was conscious of it. But this little troubled her; she had nothing of jealousy in her disposition, and had formed a strong attachment to the wife of the soldier,

which was as warmly returned. It was in consequence of this that Lady Carpenter had become god-mother to the young heir of Delamere Court. Some five years after the birth of the little fellow, the Judge and his wife returned to England; and having nothing to bind them to any particular spot, had naturally sought to fix themselves in the neighbourhood of what was to be the future residence of their friends.

Some twenty miles distant from Delamere stood a villa-like mansion, which rejoiced in the name of the Hermitage. It chanced to be in the market at the time of the return of the Carpenters to England, and Sir Edward fascinated by the beauty of the grounds, and the convenience of its locality, had purchased it. There was but little estate attached to it. Its whole territories were confined within the pales of a park which did not exceed two hun-

dred acres, but whose well-tumbled surface, by interrupting the prospect, left to the spectator the power of extending the domain after the fashion which his imagination suggested.

The house itself, though picturesque, was small; but as this excellent couple had no children, it was amply sufficient for its new inmates. One addition only was made. Sir Edward had brought with him from India his beloved books, and the number of the volumes required more ample accommodation than any which his new residence afforded. To provide it, a room had been added to the mansion, and of a size corresponding to the uses to which it was destined—some five and forty feet long by twenty feet wide. It was well lighted. At one end was a large mullioned window, descending to the floor, and on the side, three other lights, the centre one of which, fifteen feet across, and projecting

some ten more from the main apartment, formed what might be considered either as a bay window or inner room; for the voluminous folds of the curtains, hanging half way across the opening, in some degree separated the little Oratory, as the judge chose to call it, from its greater neighbour.

Sir Edward being a very accomplished man, and passionately fond of reading had, according to the almost universal rule, married a wife who scarce ever opened a book. But Lady Carpenter, though nothing of a blue-stocking, possessed qualities that amply compensated for the absence of literary habits. She was cheerful, frank, honest, kind-hearted. She had warm sympathies, and idolized her husband. True, the little woman did not occasionally understand Sir Edward's quotations, but she always listened to them with eager interest, and though she cared not for

reading herself, she ever insisted on sitting by her husband while he read. It would have been impossible to have had a less obtrusive companion. With her knitting-needles in her hand, she quietly continued her Penelope-like labours, stealing from time to time a glance at her worthy spouse, to ascertain how he was proceeding with his studies. If he looked grave, Lady Carpenter said nothing; if he smiled, she declared the passage must be an amusing one, and insisted on hearing it. The good-humoured Judge read aloud at once, and for a minute or two the anecdote was commented on, but chiefly by the gentleman, for the lady, for the most part, confined herself to smiling or listening. Sir Edward would then resume his book, and the lady her knitting-needle. The fondness for propinquity, which had been begun by affection, became strengthened by habit; and

when the worthy couple returned to England, it was determined that the new addition to the Hermitage should act in the double capacity of library and drawing-room.

In accordance with this, the room had its walls covered all round to the height of six feet from the ground, with book-cases of satin wood, containing the prized folios, and quartos, and octavos. Above these were ranged china vases, of every variety of manufacture; while behind and on the upper walls were pictures. The recess formed by the bay window had been specially reserved for Sir Edward's own use. There stood his arm-chair, his writing-table, and some favourite volumes which were the subjects of frequent reference—his "Bayle's Dictionary"—his "Encyclopædia"—his "Gazetteer"—his "Atlas."

The good old knight had descended to

his fathers, but his excellent widow still treasured his memory with the warmest affection. To her the little recess was a sacred spot, and a tear would often stand in her eyes as she regarded it. A black ribbon had been found tied across her husband's arm-chair. No one asked by whose hands it had been placed there, or why, nor was any one cruel enough to remark it. It was sufficiently understood that the seat was not to be used for the future. As for the books, poor Lady Carpenter did not affect to relish or understand them; but no volumes were more carefully dusted, or if used, more anxiously replaced on the site which they had always occupied. Lady Carpenter would not have permitted a new arrangement for the riches of Peru.

Occasionally too, in moments of affec-

tionate memory, she would turn up some well-known passage, which Sir Edward had been in the habit of quoting from some favourite author, and would endeavour, as she perused it, to recal the tone and the expression of the reader. But the good dame was not literary, and the unusual effort generally terminated by her falling asleep with the volume in her hand. The fault was a venial one. There are not a few women in the world on whom a book has the effect of a soporific.

Amongst those who appreciated as they deserved the excellencies of the Judge's widow, was Mrs. Staunton. The two ladies were distantly connected. They had been brought up at the same school together, and had been intimate friends. The affection had remained unbroken through life. It had been maintained by frequent cor-

respondence during the residence of the Carpenters in India; and when the Judge and his worthy wife returned to England, the former playmates eagerly renewed their girlhood's intimacy. Sir Edward and his wife had been frequent visitors at the Stauntons', in London, and at the large villa which they occupied in the neighbourhood of the manufacturing establishment, at Manchester; and when in the preceding year a sudden illness had carried off Mrs. Staunton, she had, with her last breath, and with the full concurrence of her husband, left her daughter to the care of her early friend. No one was better calculated to discharge, honestly, the trust; and Mary was now resident at the Hermitage, paying her first visit to one who was, for the future, to be to her in the place of a mother.

"And so, my dear," said Lady Carpenter to Mary Staunton, as seated at the breakfast table, at the Hermitage, she opened the letters which awaited her appearance,—"so we are to have a visitor to-day."

"And who may that be?"

"My godson Frank Delamere."

Mary looked grave.

"The intelligence, my love," said her old friend, "seems anything but agreeable. I recollect, when I was at your age, that the announcement of the arrival of a cavalier, young, and handsome, and rich, and well-born, would have been considered no unpleasant piece of news."

Mary said nothing.

"You are silent, my dear girl," said her kind hostess, looking anxiously on the face of her guest. "Have I committed a more

than Hibernian blunder, and asked here the very man you least wished to meet, or whom," said she with a significant smile,—"you have, perhaps, met too often already? Come, my love, though I am Frank's godmother, I am as trustworthy a confidant as ever father confessor that looked upon St. Peter's. Have you made the discovery that Frank is a very warm-hearted, very good looking, very gentlemanly young fellow?"

And Lady Carpenter fixed her keen glance upon the face of her guest, as if she would have read the secrets of the young girl's heart.

Apparently there were none to read. Mary Staunton met the inquisitorial look of her hostess without confusion. There was no colouring—no, not the slightest; and the large blue eye looked full and frankly upon her old friend as she replied—

"You mistake me much, my dear madam, if you suppose that Dan Cupid has anything to do with the gravity with which you charge me. And yet—for I will be frank with you—the arrival of Mr. Delamere here to-day is not a matter of indifference."

"If there be no indifference," said her hostess, in a laughing tone, "there must, indeed, be interest; and what can produce interest in a young lady's bosom towards a young gentleman but love?"

"There may be another feeling," said Miss Staunton quietly; "there may be dislike."

The reply seemed to excite the profound astonishment of Lady Carpenter. The worthy dame was in the act of pouring out for herself a second cup of tea; but Mary's expression of opinion sounded in the old

lady's ears so extraordinary, that it annihilated for the moment any wish to provide for her creature comforts. The cup was left unfilled, the tea-pot replaced in its stand, and the aged hostess, opening her hands after the most approved fashion of Demosthenic oratory, exclaimed, in tones which did justice to her astonishment—

"Dislike Frank Delamere!"

Mary nodded.

"And what," said Lady Carpenter, "has my unfortunate godson done to make you his enemy? On what occasion had he the unhappiness to offend you?"

"On no especial occasion," said Miss Staunton quietly, "for we have never met."

"Nay, nay, my dear Mary, you are playing with your old friend. If you have never seen Frank, how can he have aroused your enmity?"

Miss Staunton was silent for awhile, as if she had intended not to answer; but the anxiety depicted in the old lady's face was so evident, that Mary's better nature prevailed. It was, however, with something of an additional colour that she replied:

"To any other but yourself, my dear Lady Carpenter, I should have thought it unnecessary to offer a reason for my dislikes; but to you, as my mother's friend—and more especially," said she, with a half smile, "as you boast yourself to be a most discreet father confessor—I will frankly confess the cause of my antipathy. You know, when my father bought Houghton Farm, and fitted up the old farm-house as a bathing lodge, it was considered by the feudal magnates of the district an act of unwarrantable assurance for a cotton-spin-

ner to settle down in the midst of them, and come between the wind and their nobility. By all, without exception, he was ill-treated; but, in their petty persecutions, none distinguished himself so much as old Mr. Delamere. My poor father has strong feelings, and though he carried himself gallantly abroad, in the bosom of his family he did not conceal the irritation he felt at their petty tyranny."

"And you, my love, sucked in the poison with your growth; and from hearing perpetual abuse of the old Mr. Delamere, you gradually acquired a dislike to the young one."

Miss Staunton gave a sickly smile, and nodded.

"My dear Mary," said Lady Carpenter, "this is unworthy of you. You declaim against feudality, and you have adopted

the worst vice of its worst age—the perpetuation, as an honourable inheritance, of family hatreds. Come, come, you must not visit the sins of the father upon the child. I must insist on your liking Frank Delamere."

"Why?" said Mary, in a quiet tone, as she fixed her large blue eyes steadily upon her hostess.

The old lady coloured under the gaze, and fidgetted in her seat, as if the question were neither expected nor welcome. Twice she raised the tea-pot, as if for the purpose of filling her cup already overflowing, twice replaced it, and then, for about a minute, studied the pattern of the damask table cloth. She seemed to have regained her composure by the occupation, for she leaned back in her chair, and, with a face which was calm, but which expressed the

most devoted affection for her guest, she said:

"I may be an old fool, Mary, but my principle in life has been, that no good ever came from mystery; and I see not why I should affect it now. Listen to me; Frank Delamere is my godson, and as fine a young fellow as ever stepped. You are the daughter of my oldest friend, and possess all your mother's excellences and virtues. Why should I then disguise it from you? It has been the desire of my old heart to see two beings whom I love so much, united, and it is for that purpose that I have asked Frank Delamere here."

"Oh, madam! Oh Lady Carpenter!" said Mary, with flushed cheek, and a tear trembling in her eye, "how could you compromise me so deeply. And what will

Mr. Delamere think of me, if he knows of your plans, and deems that I am a party to their fulfilment?"

"You do not suppose it, my child," said the old lady hurriedly, and with a face whose flush rivalled her guest's; "you do not suppose I am so forgetful of the dignity of my sex or of my affection for you. I pledge you my word of honour, that I have never breathed the thought to any ear but your own. Nay; so far have I carried my feeling of delicacy, that I have scarce ever mentioned to Frank Delamere your name; and he, poor fellow, is coming here to-day, unconscious alike that you are my guest, and that the dearest wish of his godmother's heart is to see you his wife. So, my love, wipe those witnesses from your eyes—as Sir Edward used to say—and now that there is no

further occasion for your maiden blushes, let us discuss the matter quietly."

"I have nothing to say with regard to it," said Mary Staunton, with a repose of manner and tone which showed that she took no longer any interest in the conversation.

"Yes you have," said the persevering old lady, "I do not ask you to promise to like him; I am no such fool, for you have not seen him yet; but I ask you this, that you will meet him without prejudice, and judge of him by his own merits and demerits, and not by those of that old bigot, his grandfather."

"As your guest," said Mary with a half smile, "I shall be civil to him. But I tell you frankly, my dear Lady Carpenter," (and the young lady spoke with a certain degree of wilfulness in the expression

and tone which sounded painfully in her companion's ear), "in conceding this I concede much; and that, now or hereafter, I do not promise for more."

With the words she raised her fore-finger with an admonitory gesture, and as if to put a stop to the conversation, took up the "Morning Chronicle," which had accompanied from the Post Office the letter which had formed the subject of the conversation, and reading aloud one of its leading articles, was soon with her hostess, absorbed in the great events which then agitated Europe.

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE IN THE BUD.

"'Tis safest to begin with a little aversion."

THE RIVALS.

Frank Delamere came late. Amongst the axioms with which he had stored his mind, during his apprenticeship to the gay world, was one that a visitor to a country house should arrive with the dressing-bell. Frank always travelled on horseback, and he had found that his appearance in the forenoon, with mudded boots and buckskins (for these were the favoured days of tops and

leathers), boded evil alike to the Axminster carpets of his hostess and his own comfort. It had ever become his object, therefore, to reach his place of destination at the precise moment which would permit, and enable him to cast his slough before he presented himself to the eyes of the lady of the mansion.

Upon the present occasion, well acquainted with the habits of the Hermitage, he had timed his advent so happily, that the last notes of the dinner-bell were chiming as he wended his way along the avenue.

As he drew up his horse at the hall door, the portal opened, and the old major domo, who had evidently been upon the out-look, appeared from behind it.

"Just in time, Mr. Francis," said the ancient servitor, as with a somewhat paternal look he surveyed the new arrival (for Frank, in his character of godson, was considered as

one of the family; and the sayings, doings, and looks of the handsome young squire were a perpetual subject of conversation and interest to its unchanging household). "Just in time, Mr. Francis, I doubt I ought to call you Mr. Delamere now that the old gentleman is dead, but some how or other it does not sound half so pleasant in my old ears."

"Never mind, Jones, call me what you will. And so I am just in time."

"Yes, my lady has been long gone to her room; and you know she does not like to have dinner kept waiting."

"Quite right, old boy," said Frank, "and I will dress in five minutes."

"Oh, you have a quarter of an hour to spare, sir, for your groom came early, and I took your things from your saddle bags, and have laid them out for you; but put them on nicely, Mr. Frank," said the old man,

with the confidence of a favoured domestic, "for there is a pretty young lady living just now at the Hermitage, and with a half grin," the butler of Lady Carpenter, who had attended the young visitor to the door of his bedroom, closed it without waiting a reply, and left Frank to complete his hurried toilet, and to speculate in his own mind as to who could be the fair one who had been invited by his godmother to share her solitude.

He was soon dressed, and the costume of the time was well calculated to show to advantage his very handsome figure. The black coat, white waistcoat and neckcloth, differed little from those of the present day, but the black knee-breeches, long silk stockings, and shoes, gave a finish to the picture in which is sadly deficient the loose, slovenly trousers which now supplies their place.

With all his haste the dinner-bell had rung

before Frank had reached the drawing-room, and he found the two ladies upon their feet and waiting for him.

"Good morning, or rather good evening, my dear boy," said the old dame, as she affectionately kissed the cheek offered to her. "Late as usual; but come, there is no time to lose; let me make you acquainted with a young lady who has had the good nature to cheer the dulness of an old woman's life. Miss Staunton, Mr. Delamere. So now give her your arm, for I am mistress in my own house, and choose to lead the way alone."

With these words Lady Carpenter moved towards the dining-room, and was followed, though not immediately, by the young couple.

In fact, if poor Mary had been brought up with a strong prejudice against the inmates

of Delamere Court, Frank had been no less accustomed to hear from his grandfather daily and hourly denunciations of the insolence, the assurance, and the thousand imperfections, mental and bodily, in mind, manner, and estate, of the Cotton Spinner. When, therefore, the representative of all these evil qualities was suddenly presented to him, it is not to be wondered at that notwithstanding the beauty and grace of the fair creature before him, he should have made an involuntary gesture of surprise and withdrawal. It was but momentary however. His good taste, his good feeling and his gallantry, instantly led him to correct his fault, and bowing with a respect which could not have been greater had the young lady by his side been a princess of royal blood, he offered his arm to the daughter of James Staunton.

The feeling of repugnance and its correction had not occupied more than a second, but Mary's quick eye had noted both.

"A true Delamere," said she to herself; "how well my father painted them; and to bow to me after such a fashion. How I detest the pride which apes humility."

She accepted, however, the arm which was offered her, though the curl of her lip and her haughtiness of manner expressed distinctly enough, that the daughter of the Cotton Spinner did not consider herself honoured by the attentions of the heir of Delamere Court.

Alas for poor Lady Carpenter, and her best of all possible intentions. The enforced union which she had in her own mind calculated was likely to bring her young friends together, had in one second overturned her plans and riveted the prejudices of both.

Society, however, is too well regulated to display upon its surface the secret feelings of its actors, and after the first blush had passed away from the cheeks of the young couple, the most inveterate master of ceremonies would have found nothing to find fault with in their measured and precise politeness. They gained the dining-room. Lady Carpenter had already taken her seat, and Frank at the foot of the table amid an affected attention to his duties as carver, gradually recovered his composure.

"The old lady," said he to himself, "has brought me here for the purpose of mending my shattered fortunes with the gold of Staunton Lodge. I would not marry the girl, if she could pin to her apron the riches of Peru."

Having made this heroic resolve he proceeded to put it in practice, and for the

amusement of his godmother, commenced a detail of the anecdotes of the capital. Frank Delamere was naturally clever. He had been a first class man at Oxford, and possessed all that solid information upon which conversational talent when it is of a high order must necessarily rest. Besides, the Delameres of Delamere, like the Duke of Croy, traced their pedigree to the flood, and upon better grounds boasted of high connections up to the Conquest. Thus Frank had seen the best society, and though society does not bestow the gems of life, it alone bestows the talent necessary for their polishing. Frank too possessed that rarest of English qualities; he related well, and under his magic touch, ministers and opposition, court and town, ladies of the great world, and ladies of the stage, Pitt and Fox, Sheridan and the Regent, the Duchess of

Devonshire and Madame Catalani, appeared and disappeared in turn.

To the mistress of the Hermitage the anecdotes were for the most part new, and those which were not, received a fresh value from the brilliancy of their setting. The dinner passed off pleasantly. Lady Carpenter listened eagerly to the narrative, partly indeed from the pleasure awakened by the anecdotes, and partly from a natural pride in the talent of him who uttered them.

"I wonder," said the good old lady to herself, as she fixed her eyes upon the face of her fair guest, "I wonder what Mary thinks of him. She must have found out that he is very clever. She must see that he is very handsome."

Miss Staunton's expression, however, set at defiance the old lady's inquisitorial

glance. To judge from appearances, the heiress of Staunton Lodge was heart and soul employed in paring an apple.

The dinner was soon over, and the ladies adjourned to the drawing-room, to which they were shortly afterwards followed by Frank Delamere. The interval of his absence had been spent by the fair guest in contemplation.

"He is very handsome," said she to herself, "I don't think I ever met a young man so gentlemanly. And there is no doubt of his talent. But after all how disagreeable he was with it. What was the use of telling us that anecdote of Sheridan at Brighton? Where the necessity of narrating that repartee of Mr. Erskine to the Duchess? Why, but to let me know that he had been dining at the Pavillion or Devonshire House: but to

shew me the unmeasurable distance between Delamere of Delamere, and the Cotton Spinner's daughter. I know I shall end by disliking every one of the name as much as my father. But I must show him that we too, though we are not Normans, have our share of proper pride. Lady Carpenter is always speaking of my singing and my playing, and when he asks me I will take a cold, I will refuse to touch the piano or utter a note."

Alas for the resolutions of the young beauty. Frank Delamere shortly afterwards made his appearance in the drawing-room. He had got over the embarrassment occasioned by his first meeting with Miss Staunton, and had re-entered into the routine of his ordinary thoughts and affections. Warmly attached to his godmother, on entering the room he sat down beside

the old lady on the sofa, and employed himself so happily in narrating the sayings and doings of her old friends in town, that the short space that was to elapse between his appearance in the drawing-room, and the hour of nine passed away without either being conscious of the existence of the young heiress, and it was only on the arrival of Jones with the tea-things that Lady Carpenter was awakened to a recollection of her forgetfulness of her duties to one of her guests.

"Nine o'clock, I declare," said the old dame. "It must be nine, for Jones is as accurate as a chronometer. You have been so amusing, Frank, that I never could have fancied it so late. But you would have been much better employed in listening to Miss Staunton's singing and playing, than talking to an old woman. Do you know

that Mary—Miss Staunton I mean—sings beautifully? You must hear her after tea, and then you shall tell me if you think that Catalani is superior."

The silver urn was placed upon the table, and the meal proceeded. But the old lady, to whom in her solitary life a meal was one of the important events of the day, and who, in consequence, endeavoured to make the most of it, from old habit prolonged on the present occasion its continuance (having the delay aided by some fresh anecdotes of Frank's) to such an extent, that the tea-things were scarcely removed when Mr. Jones's powdered head once more exhibited itself at the door, accompanied by a tray on which were arranged the bed-room candles.

"Ten o'clock, I declare," said Lady Carpenter, "who could have fancied it so late,

and now you must go to bed without your having heard Mary play."

The young heir of Delamere Court expressed no regret for the loss to which he had been subjected, but employed himself assiduously in lighting the bedroom tapers. They were taken by his companions, and, having received an affectionate kiss on the cheek from his godmother, and a stately and haughty courtesy from her companion, Lady Carpenter and her fair friend departed.

"Dislike him," muttered the latter, as with slow steps she followed her hostess up the staircase, "I positively detest him!"

Alas! poor Mary, to have formed a magnanimous resolution to refuse either to play or to sing, and never to have been asked.

CHAPTER X.

MARY STAUNTON.

"Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak."

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

THE following day saw the party collected round Lady Carpenter's breakfast-table. Mary Staunton on the preceding evening had laid her head upon the pillow, with feelings towards Frank Delamere which were certainly not those of charity, and her morning thoughts had scarcely assumed a more amiable character. She did not the less, however, notwithstand-

ing what she felt to be her just indignation, devote herself and the aid of her abigail to the adornment of her person; for though young men are occasionally the most disagreeable persons upon earth yet with all their evil qualities, few spinsters like to appear before them except to the best advantage; and in this respect Mary was a very woman. Had she been less so, she would not have been half so loveable. Her strong sound sense, her great information, her moral courage, and her too unbending will, would have given her a harsh and pedantic character, but for those little vanities and follies which connected her with her fair sisters, and entitled her to a share of their sympathies.

Her toilet therefore was protracted half an hour longer than usual. As to the cause of this unwonted care, it would be difficult to analize it. Miss Staunton would have been

indignant, if even her old friend Lady Carpenter had suggested that it was to appear to advantage in the eyes of Frank Delamere. Even to herself Mary would not acknowledge it. Be the reason what it may, and we leave it to our fair readers to explain it after their own fashion, the self-idolatry was so prolonged that the breakfast bell had rung and her old friend and Frank were seated at their morning meal before she made her appearance.

How beautiful she looked with her tall, slender, yet well-rounded figure; her small head so gracefully set upon her shoulders, and her auburn hair dressed *à la grecque*, after the classic models which the French Republic had re-introduced, and Mr. Hope's book made fashionable in England. Mary's face was eminently Saxon. The hue of health upon her cheek was clear and rosy; the skin, beneath which could be traced the veins on

brow and neck, transparent; the large blue eye well opened and in its calm depths exhibiting kindliness of heart, courage and honesty. The forehead was lofty and eloquent with mind, and the nose small, straight, and beautifully chiselled about the nostril. The mouth though not less physically attractive, was not so perfect in its expression. The upper lip indeed was short, curled, and pouting, but the under—ah! there was the defect of Mary's face. The under pressed itself to its rosy fellow with a degree of tenacity, which spoke of wilfulness—of a self-dependance carried to the extreme—of a confidence in her own judgment, which admitted no doubt of the correctness of her own views, and no hesitation either in expressing them or carrying them into action.

But it is idle to mark motes in the sunbeam. In spite of her one fault Mary was

still beautiful, and she never could have selected a better moment for displaying that beauty in its perfection. The morning toilet is the toilet of English women. The daughters of France and Italy may appear to greater advantage in the theatre or ball-room, but it is only in the British Isles that one meets in the female face with that purity of skin and of expression, that can stand the test of a summer's sun or the tasteful negligence of a morning dress. Frank Delamere entertained, as the reader knows, a strong prejudice against the house of Staunton, and a contempt at once hereditary and educational for cotton-spinners and their offspring; but he could not help feeling that he had never seen anything more aristocratic in bearing, than the fair creature who passed before him, with that quiet yet firm step which, while it marks elasticity of limb, conveys also the idea

of mental self-possession; and when Mary pressed her lips to the forehead of her aged hostess, he felt for the moment, that he would have been content to have become an old woman, if he could thereby have secured an old woman's privileges. He was recalled, however, on the instant from his tendency to admiration by Miss Staunton (for she had not forgotten his sins of omission on the preceding evening) turning towards him, and giving him a recognition so haughty and formal, as at once to wither his incipient tenderness in the bud.

"Pshaw," said he to himself, "she bows to me like the Duchess of Devonshire, and she only a cotton-spinner's daughter."

Poor Frank! He was but new in the ways of the sex, and as yet had not learned that when a woman's passions are roused, her mortified vanity or her anger, can give

to her attitude and gesture, a power and dignity, which conventionality and rank, though they may imitate, seldom equal.

The breakfast proceeded coldly, and without any diminution on either part of the mental alienation of the guests. Indeed ere the week was over, the dislike was so little concealed, as to force itself upon the attention even of their unobservant hostess, and poor Lady Carpenter was in despair; but she was too sensible a woman to remonstrate. Prejudices like creeds grow by opposition; and she knew that to enter upon the subject with either party, would be to confirm her two young guests in the hostility which she deplored. She did not, however, the less feel that the hopes of her old age were blasted, and she acted upon the feeling. During the first two or three days of the visit, she had used a thousand little feminine plans to bring

the unwilling couple together. If Mary was despatched for a volume to the library, Frank was sent to assist her in finding it. If Frank was instructed to change the place of two flower-pots in the greenhouse, Mary was employed to assist him in his labour. Both parties saw through the transparent *ruses* of their well-meaning but simple-minded hostess, and both parties inwardly determined that they would show by their conduct that they were neither blinded, nor would be led by them. The alienation in consequence became greater than ever ; but when the old lady gave up her hopeless project in despair, and resigned herself unwillingly to the total failure of her scheme, she at the same time gave up the plans by which she had hoped to accomplish it. Frank was no longer sent after Miss Staunton ; Miss Staunton was no longer employed to call Frank. The gentle-

man was allowed to shoot and to fish without any person making inquiries as to the line of his travels or his success; while the ladies found their way to the pony-chaise without there being any cavalier as before, to put on Mary's shawl, to hand her the reins, to present her with the whip. Lady Carpenter in her hopelessness of success, had become indifferent whether her wayward pupils were together or separate.

Had the old dame sought to devise the most skilfully planned scheme for the accomplishment of her object, she could not have adopted a better than that forced upon her by her despair. The lady and gentleman began for the first time, to feel themselves independant actors. When there was no longer any effort made to bring them together, there no longer existed in either any reason for endeavouring to prove their in-

difference by forcing themselves separate; and when they did meet by chance, their meetings were occasionally prolonged, simply from the consciousness in both, that it was a matter of indifference to all, whether they were together or not. Besides their scarce concealed aversion to each other, had, strange to say, awakened in each other mutual respect.

"Mr. Delamere is no doubt," said Mary to herself, "a most disagreeable person, and has all the silly prejudices of his family in favour of ancestry; yet I did him wrong in supposing that he was a party to Lady Carpenter's plans, or that he wanted to marry me for my fortune. With all his faults, I must say that he is independant."

"The girl," said Frank to himself, "is intolerable with her *parvenue* pride; but

it is evident enough (the more her bad taste) that she has no intention of forcing herself into Delamere Court. It is safe to be civil to her."

The consequence was evident. As soon as both parties had satisfied themselves that they were, and always would be, indifferent to each other, and that there was no danger in contiguity, they ceased to exert themselves to be separate. Human beings are intended for society, and when God decided that it was not good for man to be alone, and sent him a woman as a helpmate and a comforter, He instilled into the bosoms of our race a longing for the companionship of the other sex, which, though it may not be always avowed, is always felt.

Besides, Lady Carpenter was somewhat prosy. She was the best hearted and best

principled little soul in the world; but she was of the earth, earthy. Though she had attempted to bring her wards together, there was in the meaning of Hamlet, "no speculation in her eye." Her mind never highly cultivated, had lost even much of its moderate power in the hum-drum monotony of her country life; and she confined herself, in her search for subjects of interest, to the little matter-of-fact avocations which such a life offers. She was great on the subject of Muscovy ducks, prided herself on having the finest white turkeys in the county, and possessed a tuft-headed brood of fowls, unequalled in England.

All this was very amiable, but neither Mary nor Frank Delamere had any passion for poultry. Both were highly accomplished. Frank had been distinguished at College,

and Mary with a natural taste for reading had had that taste fostered by an excellent governess and well selected masters; for old Staunton had forgot his economies in his doating fondness for his child, and was lavish in the expenditure necessary for her improvement. It was natural therefore that they, the sole tenants of the house, with the exception of the hostess, should occasionally turn from the eulogistic discourses of Lady Carpenter, on the best breed of bantams, to subjects more pregnant with interest to both. The very differences of their personal character, and that of their education tended to this. Frank naturally ardent, poetical, imaginative, had had this habit of mind fostered by the classical character of his education. His language was eloquent, his ideas graceful, his memory excellent. But classical studies,

while they improve memory and give grace to idea and to language, add but little to soundness of judgment, and it was precisely in this that Mary Staunton was superior to her companion. Her reading too, had been great; but the practical cast of mind which she inherited from her father, had not merely exhibited itself in the selection of the works which had been the subject of her studies, but in the deductions which she drew from them. Frank derived much of his happiness by connecting his lore with the past: Miss Staunton by the application of hers to the present. These habits of thought, differing as they did so materially, necessarily had the effect of presenting each dogma of the philosopher, and each historical event under two aspects, and the very dissimilarity of opinion, offering as it did a constant subject of opposition, had

the insensible consequence of drawing the opponents together. The arguments of both were so well supported, that it became a matter of honour in either party to convert the other; and in religion, or out of religion, what pleasure is so great as making a proselyte. Insensibly, they walked together, they rode together; till at last in differing perpetually, they acquired a sort of necessity for each other's society, if it were only for the purpose of differing again.

In all this good Lady Carpenter, who, if she had looked beneath the cards might have found much to console her, saw nothing consolatory. The worthy dame only remarked that her young visitors in words, at least, never agreed, and she had not learned from Voltaire's adage, that words do not always accurately represent

feelings. Of the subjects of discussion which took place in the long autumn evenings she knew little. Of the commentaries on them she understood less. Seated in her arm-chair by the side of the fire, and employed in working an eternal purse, she for the most part caught only the words of occasional opposition, and groaning in spirit that her plans for the happiness of her guests should have so signally failed, sunk into a placid slumber.

The somnolent habit of their hostess in no degree affected the tone of conversation. The young couple always in contradiction, but always in good temper with each other, scarce perceived whether the worthy dame was sleeping or waking, and continued their laughing gossip. The topics which presented themselves were various. History, poetry, society, manners, were taken

up as chance dictated. Frank was for the most part the spokesman, and he spoke right well; but at intervals Miss Staunton would interrupt him, and by a few short sentences pregnant with her strong sound sense, would scatter to the winds some brilliant theory which he had been creating. Then would follow fresh eloquence and fresh refutation. Sometimes, to give effect to his opinions, the gentleman would take a weighty folio from the shelves, and opening it at a well-remembered passage, would quote it in support of his theory; while the lady, too honest a controversialist not to desire to be convinced, but with a sparkle in her eye which intimated no disinclination to find, if it were possible, a loop-hole for escape, would read it with affected earnestness. At such moments, Frank, in his anxiety to direct his com-

panion's attention to the words that were to secure to him victory, would, as he stood behind her, lean over the fair girl's shoulder, and the faces of the students were thus occasionally placed in dangerous proximity.

"When two such faces are so, 'twould be wise,
But very difficult to shut the eyes."

Alas, in 1802, Byron had not written. It was a pity, for Mary and Frank might have profited by the counsel. The Montague and the Capulet alike were in a fair way of forgetting their hereditary enmities.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRESENT AND THE PAST.

"He *was* a yeoman. Well! Is it dishonour
For man to labour? I would rather be
The builder of my fortunes, than the heir
Of some great race, whose fierce and sunlike rays
But shamed the dullness of my feebler beams."

ANONYMOUS.

THE mornings of autumn are no where so lovely as in England. The French grape-gathering season, or the Italian *villeggiatura* may sound more romantic, and perchance impress more strongly the imagination, embellished as they are by the descriptions of Boccaccio, or the pictures of Watteau; but

the reality is less agreeable. The vines cut down in France to the gooseberry-bush pattern, are among the least picturesque of nature's creations; while in Italy, where the tendrils are allowed to twine themselves after their own fashion, the landscape is spoiled by the parched, burnt up, character of the grass, and the monotonous foliage of the eternal olive tree or ilex. Besides, in both countries, the heat in the latter part of the harvest season is intolerable, and nature to be seen with any thing like comfort to the spectator, must be surveyed at a distance, from the interior of some shady grove, or cool and dusky portico.

In England, on the contrary, there is no period of the year in which the rural districts look so beautiful. In spring and summer, the forest, the meadow, the very arable ground waving with its young crops, present

to the eye one unvaried surface of perpetual green; and the universality of the tints, beautiful as they are, produces monotony. But in autumn, the yellow stubbles, the still fresh verdure of the pasture land, and the brown, the russet, or the golden livery of the forest, all make each feature of the landscape individually distinguishable, and present a whole, which charms from the variety of its colours, ever beautiful in their contrast or their combination.

In England too, the hand of man has tasked itself to aid the beauties of nature. The lordly park, the village spire, the trim cottages with their white-washed walls, neat gardens and honeysuckled porches, alike contribute to furnish a picture which one seeks for in vain in the solitary towns of the south, or the villageless and cottageless campagnas which surround and connect them.

In addition to this, the admirers of the English picturesque in the fall of the year can change the landscape at will; and instead of passing the live long day in the languid pleasures of the siesta, may amid fresh breezes, and beneath the rays of a less fervent sun, seek hourly new scenes of interest and beauty.

It was upon such a morning that Lady Carpenter and her guests stood at the door of the Hermitage.

"And what, my dear Frank," said the old dame, "are you going to do with yourself this morning?"

"Nothing," said her godson. "I have no employment whatever, and I should feel grateful for a commission."

"Then I will give you one, but I will not tax your obedience too highly. Miss Staunton, before you came here, was expressing a wish to see the ruins of Fitzallan Castle.

You shall show her them, and as I cannot go with you myself, old Timothy shall chaperone the party."

Frank bowed obedience, and as Miss Staunton made no objection, the horses were brought to the door, and the young couple proceeded on their excursion, followed by the venerable charioteer of Lady Carpenter, mounted upon one of the steeds which, on ordinary occasions, drew the vehicle of his worthy mistress.

An hour and a half's ride brought them to the object of their search. It was an old ruin, the remains of a pile which had played a distinguished part in the days of the Plantagenets, and whose early masters had supported royalty, or opposed it, as suited the ambition or the interest of the hour. Of all its grandeur little remained. Here and there was a rent tower or crumbling buttress,

which stood nodding to their fall, but which, covered with ivy, looked beautiful even in decay. The park had been broken up by cultivation, except a small portion in the immediate neighbourhood of the ruins where some stunted hollies, or half wild fruit trees, showed that once a garden had smiled, and through which ran a bright brawling stream. Some half mile below, and upon the side of the little river, was a village which seemed rapidly expanding into importance, while near it, and by the water, stood several lofty buildings of three or four stories in height, and covered with windows.

The bustle of the place, its active population, its numerous drays hurrying to and fro, the volumes of smoke issuing from the tall minaret-like chimneys attached to the many windowed edifices, all marked distinctly enough a rising manufacturing town.

At no great distance was a mansion, evidently the residence of the master-spirit that had created this change. It was a large square building of freestone, of late date, in that simple unarchitectural style which distinguishes the rural residences of the higher classes in the early part of the reign of George the Third, and which Horace Walpole has characterised as tall, square, and angular, like a town-house walked out to take the air. If the structure was unadorned, however, it was obviously from no want of means on the part of the proprietor to defray, if he had been so disposed, the expenses of its decoration. The building itself was large, and finished in the best style of workmanship, if not of art, and the offices and garden attached to it, fitted for the reception and supply of a large establishment. It stood snugly by the side

of the little stream, and was sheltered behind by a conical hill of moderate height, planted to the summit, and which with some three hundred acres recently enclosed, was intended to form a park. The wood in the young domain was as yet scarce visible in the landscape; but the alders and oaks which fringed the stream were of great age, and by their fantastic outlines and combinations, as they nearly met over the water (alternate in its changes of rapid and pool) offered an agreeable object to the eye. Every thing in the domain and its appurtenances was in extreme of English neatness, and gave indisputable evidence of wealth and its expenditure.

The contrast between the neglected ruins around them with their calm, death-like aspect, and the stir and trim order beneath, seemed to strike Miss Staunton and Frank

Delamere; and both, for Timothy had been left at the gate with the horses, paused to observe it.

The air was balmy, the perfume from the wild flowers, delicious, the murmur of the water as it rippled over the pebbles sounded pleasant in the ear; and the young couple, as if by common consent, sat down on a turfy bank at the foot of a ruined tower.

For some time there was dead silence. The eyes of each were fixed on the scene below, and both seemed wrapped in their own reflections. The silence was broken by Miss Staunton.

"What a contrast," said Mary. "The present and the past."

"True, what a contrast," repeated her companion; "but you ought to say Miss Staunton—the past and the present."

"Why?"

"Need you ask?"

"I confess the necessity of the question."

"We are seated at the base of the stronghold of the Fitzallans, and we are looking on the workings of a spinning-jenny."

"True, for the fact," said his fair companion, turning towards him with a smile. "Now for the inference."

"Can you seriously require it? The Fitzallans, in their day, gave and took away kingdoms."

"True again. That they possessed power I acknowledge; but I am still, I confess, blind enough not to see what deduction you derive from this."

"Can you indeed ask me? Does it not excite regret to see all their glories passed away, and their place usurped by a new and unknown race?"

"Shall I shock you, Mr. Delamere, if I

should answer, *no*. Why should I regret them?"

"The Fitzallans were great, powerful, and famous."

"It may be so; but greatness and power to excite respect, in my mind, must have been employed for valuable purposes. If history tells us truly, it was in their case acquired, and used, only for selfish ones."

"Have you no respect, then, for the energy and courage which made them the heads of parties, and the leaders of armies?"

"None, unless the consequence of their exertions was to benefit humanity. Were I to adopt, without such a caveat, your reason for admiration, I should admire the Goth, the Hun, the Vandal, the Turk; for each and all, like the Fitzallans, were bold and enterprising; but I admire them not, because, like the possessors of this fortress, they only

marked the magnitude of their energy by the magnitude of the selfishness, the spoliation, the ruin which accompanied it."

"You are severe."

"I am just."

"You put no value on enterprise or ambition."

"On the contrary, no one entertains a greater respect for both."

"Yet but now you held as nought these qualities."

"True, in the Fitzallans, and as they applied them. But you have before you an example in which enterprise and energy have been exhibited after a different fashion, and where I admire both."

"I am unfortunate enough not to comprehend you."

"I must then play the Cumæan Sybil. You see the little town below."

"Clearly."

"You see the bustle in its streets, the drays, the activity, the workmen, the numerous cottages scattered all around it?"

"True, true, true. But what of this?"

"Have patience," said his companion, with a smile. "Will Mr. Delamere permit me to say that impatience is one of his faults?"

Frank coloured and was silent.

Miss Staunton remarked the flushed countenance, and added:

"Nay, I meant not to offend. But I am near the end of my argument. You observe that house at the foot of the knoll."

"That white, staring, square, ugly, unpicturesque building."

"Precisely. The proprietor of that house is evidently the author of all this bustle and activity."

"No doubt of it. That is Mr. Arkinson's the cotton-spinner."

"Well! That man possesses the sort of energy which I admire."

"Good heavens!" said Frank Delamere, jumping to his feet in surprise, "you do not, Miss Staunton, compare Mr. Arkinson to the great Fitzallans."

"I do not, Mr. Delamere. I should never have thought of putting them on a parallel. I hold Mr. Arkinson to be infinitely their superior."

Frank was speechless with astonishment.

"I fear, Mr. Delamere," said his companion, "that you consider me little better than a heretic."

It is probable that internally Frank did so, but the large, blue, laughing eyes which were fixed on him, were so frank and honest, and the face to which they belonged so beautiful,

that he found it impossible to be angry with heresy in such a guise. He could not assent, however, and he was silent and grave.

"Come," said his gay companion, with something of malice in her glance, "you regard me with as dismayed a look as if you were enacting Hamlet, and I representing the departed Majesty of Denmark. I shall never have the courage to go on with my argument, unless you abandon your attitude of horror; so I pray of you to smile, and resume your seat upon the turf."

Frank privately thought that there was something like presumption in a cotton-spinner's daughter ordering the heir of Delamere Court to be seated; but it was impossible to contest the matter with a being so beautiful, so he obeyed.

"Ah, now," said she, "that you have recovered from your shock, and become once

more a patient listener, I will prove to your satisfaction that I am right.

Frank shook his head gravely, and in dissent.

"Well then," said his laughing companion, "I will prove it to your conviction, and not to your satisfaction. Now listen to me."

The injunction was unnecessary. Frank's eyes were fixed upon the fair speaker with an earnestness which brought the colour into her cheeks. She affected, however, not to observe it, and having speedily recovered her self-possession, went on:

"You know how the Fitzallans, those great nobles of the days of the Plantagenets, lived?"

"Not exactly."

"You allow that in those days one great noble lived much like another?"

"Likely enough."

"You have read Froissart?"

Frank nodded.

"Now," said the fair speaker, holding up her forefinger admonishingly, "answer me upon your honour. Does his narrative of these feudal princes, (even in sketching those among them, whom, like the Count of Foix, he holds up as the beau ideal of chivalry,) represent in his heroes any other principle of action than intense selfishness, and a systematic disregard of the happiness, the wishes, the interests of those around them?"

Frank paused.

"You forget," said he after awhile, "the clemency of Edward the Third to the burgesses of Calais."

"I forget it not," said his fair companion, "nor do I deny that the *preux chevaliers* of these days exhibited occasional instances of high flown generosity; but they were

most rare, and rare as they were, were never offered except to such as were fortunate enough to hold the same exalted rank as themselves. Even in the case you speak of, the clemency which spared the French citizens was not what it ought to have been:—a tribute to their courage and their patriotism, but the gallant courtesy of a high born man to a high born woman. But to those who were dependant on them, have we any instances of this chivalry? No. To their vavasours, their vassals, their serfs; to the great masses of the community; to that, in short, which we in the present day call the people, those feudal nobles—except when it suited their interest to be otherwise—were ever unjust, unfeeling, cruel."

Frank was silent for a while. He then said:

"Miss Staunton is well read in history."

His companion smiled and shook her head.

"I will not do what many young ladies would have done, Mr. Delamere, I will not quarrel with you for that speech; for though it was spoken as a compliment, it was intended as a sarcasm. But let its real meaning pass. Is not what I said true?"

"And do you really," said Frank, avoiding an answer to the question, "does Miss Staunton really and seriously prefer this Mr. Arkinson to the old and far-famed Barons of Fitzallan?"

"Really and seriously then Miss Staunton does. As an object of just admiration I hold him infinitely their superior. Look at the town below. To judge from the half ruined houses near us it must have been but a few years back a miserable hamlet, the remnant of the probably as miserable *village du seigneur*, which was the necessary accom-

panimont to the castle of its former lords; and see how it has been changed by the fostering hand of commerce and industry in the person of its owner. On every side, see busy mills, neat cottages, a modest church—evidences of successful labour, of happiness, of religion. Are not these," said the fair speaker, as her cheek crimsoned with enthusiasm, "are not these sufficient to compensate one for the passing away of the gorgeous, but the useless magnificence which preceded them?"

"They may be sufficient for you; they are not so for me," replied Frank, with something like bitterness in his tone. "Nor do I, like Miss Staunton, measure the amount of my affection by present value. They were a great race, these Fitzallans, and though their greatness has passed away, I still love and respect its memory; and beggar as Edward

Fitzallan is, and with nothing remaining to him but these old walls and the few acres that surround them; I would rather be the pauper heir of this ruin with its thousand brilliant recollections, than his wealthier successor below."

"It is natural, Mr. Delamere. Your ancestors associated themselves with the Fitzallans, and you have sympathy for their representative. You defend your class."

"And do not you—" and Frank stopped and coloured.

"And do not I you would say," replied Mary, "defend also mine? True, I do not deny it. But the reason which you give for your preference is only chivalrous. Will you permit me to say, that the reason which I could give for mine, is just?"

Frank smiled.

"Ah, Mr. Delamere," said Mary, "I

shall never forgive the incredulity of that smile. But you shall confess it; young Mr. Fitzallan is spoken of as idle and dissipated, and yet, you hold his position as enviable in comparison with that of Mr. Arkinson. Why?"

"Because he is the representative of Hugo Fitzallan, one of the great barons who forced the Magna Charta from King John."

"The representative in fact of an ancestor, who possessed energy, character, wealth, power."

"Precisely."

"Yet he himself has scarcely one of these qualities."

"Alas! it is a melancholy truth, scarce one."

"You confess then, that you admire not a substance but a shadow; not a reality but a reflection; nay more, a shadow and a re-

flection which have in themselves nothing admirable."

"It may be so, Miss Staunton; but I see not your drift."

"Yet it is simple. You respect the shadow because there has been a substance; you respect the reflection because there has been a reality. You admire the Fitzallan of the present day on account of the energy of the Fitzallan of the twelfth century; the effeminate representative, because he had a mighty ancestor. Is it not so?"

"Perchance you are right."

"But you admire the ancestor more than the representative."

"Unquestionably."

"And so do I, and therefore I admire Mr. Arkinson. Because he possesses, and employs for noble objects, the qualities which Mr. Delamere values so justly; because he

has energy, character, wealth, power; because he in short is an Ancestor."

Frank regarded his companion in dismay.

"Nay, Mr. Delamere, you need not look so aghast at my heresy in believing that the active energies of a great present, are more admirable and more honourable than the feeble representation of a great past; for you at least," she added laughing, "have nothing to fear from such a mode of criticism. The world speaks highly of the talents of Mr. Francis Delamere, and there are some folks who believe that if he gave them scope, he would ensure to himself not only a more useful, but a loftier position, than that which he now holds, as the representative of Adalbert of the Iron Hand, the best lance at Hastings, and the favourite knight of William, Duke of Normandy. But come, it is late; we must be thinking of returning to the Hermitage."

She rose as she spoke and made her way towards Timothy and the horses. She was followed passively by her companion, and both resumed their homeward ride; but it was accomplished in silence. On the feelings of the lady it would be difficult to speculate. As for the cavalier he was chewing the cud, not of sweet but of bitter fancy. The last half hour had forced on him a new idea, and it was a painful one. He had learned that the far-descended heir of Delamere, was a cypher in the eyes of Mary Staunton. True it was only the opinion of the Cotton Spinner's daughter; but poor Frank began to be conscious that to him and to his future happiness, the opinion of the Cotton Spinner's daughter had become of importance.

CHAPTER XII.

FEMALE EDUCATION.

"*Sir Anth.* Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation now, what would you have a woman know?

"*Mrs. M.* Observe me, Sir Anthony, I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning."

THE RIVALS.

THE day succeeding the ride was wet, and the ladies after breakfast adjourned to the drawing-room. Frank, who was something sore from the lectures of the preceding forenoon, did not accompany them, and with the amiable intention of communicating by his absence his displeasure to his fair com-

panion, spent the morning in the stable, and listened with the patience of a Job to an erudite discussion between the Vulcan of the village and his groom, as to the merits and demerits of a bar-shoe. When this was over, he retreated to the billiard-room and employed himself for two hours in essaying to make double hazards, and score the game off the balls.

At one o'clock he was summoned to luncheon, and responded by the messenger that he was not hungry, and was engaged. He had expected, to confess the truth, to have received a second invitation, and had even hoped that Mary might have been sent by his old hostess as its bearer. He was disappointed. No person intruded on his solitude, and he was left to make his double hazards after his own fashion.

At length they lost their charm, and

Frank his temper. The balls were knocked about with a noise which echoed all over the house, till at last, one struck with more than ordinary force, rebounded from the cushion and making its way through the air, after the manner of a bomb-shell, broke a square of glass in the window. This last feat brought the young gentleman's enthusiasm to a close, and, somewhat ashamed of himself, he made his way to the drawing-room.

"Well," said he to himself, "it was silly enough to get out of humour; but it was necessary to one's own dignity to show Miss Staunton, that she expresses her opinions too freely with regard to the value of old family and high birth. But I doubt not, that she is sufficiently punished by being obliged to spend the whole morning with no other company than that of my very

excellent, but somewhat prosy, old god-mother. I doubt not I shall find her melancholy enough."

The heir of Delamere Court opened the drawing-room door as he spoke; but the conclusions at which he had arrived did not appear to have been very accurate, for the first sound that broke upon his ear, was Mary's clear ringing laugh.

Frank stood still with the open door in his hand, and looked much as if the merriment had been a personal insult.

The two ladies were sitting near the window. The noise occasioned by his entrance naturally attracted their attention, and the expression of astonishment and irritation was so evident and ludicrous, that Lady Carpenter, who was a good humoured little soul, and who was clearly in the mood for amusement, broke out on seeing him, into a fresh burst of mirth.

This was bad enough, but what followed was still worse, for the feeling seemed contagious. Mary's gaiety was renewed, and from the malicious glance of the blue eye which accompanied it, Frank had a sort of consciousness (though the idea was almost too monstrous for belief) that the daughter of James Staunton, the cotton-spinner, was making a mockery of him the heir of the Delameres.

Adalbert of the Iron Hand, however, could not in such a trying moment have better supported the dignity of the family, for his descendant stood still with an expression which marked much of astonishment and something of indignation.

"Come, come, my dear boy," said Lady Carpenter, as soon as the cessation of her mirth enabled her to articulate, "what is the matter with you? You have deserted us

since breakfast. You would not come to lunch, and if my ears did not deceive me, have been knocking about the balls as furiously as if you had been endeavouring to play upon the billiard table the battle of Prague; and now you come in, looking as my poor husband would have said, like the knight of the rueful countenance. Your conduct is inexcusable, and the more so that you knew all the time that two fair ladies were dying of melancholy in your absence."

"Really," said Frank, with something of bitterness in his tone, "if I may judge from Miss Staunton's laugh, her sorrow on the present occasion, at least, will not be productive of any evil consequences."

"Come, man, come," said Lady Carpenter still laughing, "and do not look so spiteful. I will excuse the delay of your arrival on account of its opportuneness. You have

just come in time to assist me in defending the claims of women to all possible excellences."

"I should have thought," said her godson, closing the door and taking a seat near the fair controversialists, "I should have thought that Miss Staunton would have been the last person to have disputed the matter with you. She was yesterday so severe upon our sex, that I doubted not she would be ready enough to have found perfection in her own."

Mary coloured.

"Ah! ha!" said Lady Carpenter, gaily, "there has been some sparring in your ride; and that perhaps is the reason," continued she, with a look of intelligence, "why Mr. Delamere has this morning denied us the pleasure of his society."

It was now Frank's turn to look disconcerted.

"Come," said his godmother, "it is all the

more fortunate for me; for if she has treated the lords of the creation so ill, you are bound for their sake and your own to become my zealous ally. So I leave the argument in your hands, for to confess the truth, Mary is a little too learned for me. Let us see what your Oxford lore will do for my cause. You know you were what your dear old grandfather used to call a double first: so the credit of the University is staked upon your success."

The compliment soothed Frank's vanity, and restored him to temper; and in a tone which adapted itself to the humour of his companions he asked what had been the subject of discussion.

"You must know, my dear Frank," said Lady Carpenter, "that there is one book in the world which I consider more delightful than all others."

"I think I can guess at it," said her godson gaily. "It is the book with the fashions and the women's dresses, "La Belle Assemblée."

"You need not speak of it so irreverently, boy. But you are right as to name. Now in that book there is a most charming story, called 'Hymenæa in search of a husband.'"

"I know nothing of the merits of the tale," said Frank; "but to young ladies I should say the subject at least must be one of interest," and he looked with meaning towards Miss Staunton.

Mary neither avoided his gaze nor coloured beneath it. On the contrary, her large blue eyes met his steadily, and with a glance in which and in the expression of the rosy mouth, Frank read something of contempt.

Lady Carpenter saw nothing of the by

play, but she unconsciously came to his relief.

"It must, as you say, Frank, be a subject of interest to every young woman; though Mary, who does not like the book, has the oddest notions on the subject. But I must not, my dear girl, tell tales."

Frank's eye expressed much of curiosity and something of malice.

Mary drew herself up haughtily, and in her usual quiet tone said:

"There are no tales to tell, Lady Carpenter. The opinions I expressed to you, I would express to any one."

"And may I," said her hostess, "repeat them to Frank?"

"I cannot flatter myself that Mr. Delamere will take any interest in that or in any other opinion of mine; but if Lady Carpenter wishes to communicate to him my

observations on the sayings and doings of Hymenæa I at least have no objection."

"Well, thank you, dear, thank you," said her hostess, eagerly availing herself of the conceded permission. "Now, Frank, what do you think Miss Staunton says? She approves of the title of the novel."

"I understood that Miss Staunton disliked it."

"So she does. She dislikes the book itself, but she upholds that the title is a good one. Only fancy, 'Hymenæa in search of a Husband.' Yet Miss Staunton persists that Hymenæa was well employed, and that to be so employed is a right which belongs to every woman. How odd for a girl."

"And why odd?" said Mary. "The happiness of a life is as dear to our sex as it is to the other. That happiness, if a woman marries, must be mainly dependant

on her marriage. With what reason then can she be blamed, if she exercises to a large extent not merely prudence but forethought in making a selection which brings with it so much good or evil?"

"Now, my dear Mary," said Lady Carpenter, "that appears to me a sad heresy. Your very phrase, 'making the selection,' sounds in my ears as trenching on the delicacy of our sex. We have nothing to do to select. We should, as somebody says, be wooed, and not, unsought, be won. What say you, Frank?"

"I agree with you, Lady Carpenter," said he, speaking with the enthusiasm of his age. "A woman has nothing to do with making a selection. She should be sought for, gazed at, worshipped, set aside from the rest of the world as a divinity or an idol."

"There, Mary," rejoined her aged hostess, "what say you to that?"

"That if it is intended as a compliment, I do not receive it as such. I consider an idol the very last thing that a woman should wish to be. Why what is it? A thing of wood, or brass, or clay, which receives its value from the dresses or the jewels which are hung upon it, and imposes upon men by appealing to the extravagance of their imagination, and not to the sobriety or justness of their judgment. I for one, should be sorry to be idolized on such terms."

"Mercy on us, Mary, you are not like any young girl I ever saw. Are not Hymenæa and all the beautiful young ladies in our novels always spoken of as idols, and admired and run after?"

"And that is the reason," said Miss

Staunton, "that I entertain such a contempt for the works of their class."

"Do you then," said Frank, "think it either improper or unnatural that your sex should wish to excite admiration, and ours to offer it?"

"On the contrary, I approve the feeling in both, but I should desire that the qualities which inspire it in the one sex or give a title to it in the other, should in themselves be productive of something beyond mere admiration."

"Dear me, Mary," said Lady Carpenter. "How could you wish to be more perfect than Hymenæa?"

"How could I be less so? She goes to a certain number of balls and parties, and wears a carefully catalogued variety of velvet gowns and cachemere shawls; but what does she do, that an automaton figure could

not do as well? I blush for my sex," said Mary, as her cheek flushed with excitement, "I ever blush for them when I read works like Hymenæa, and other such like books and journals which are especially devoted to their glorification."

"Bless me, girl, what fault can you find with them?"

"My dear Lady Carpenter, need you ask? What do they record of women? Is it their high character, their natural talents, their energies, their affection? Nothing of the sort. They tell you that their favourite heroines had a plume of ostrich feathers, a hooped petticoat, a diamond necklace, but of the woman herself positively nothing. As if the living, breathing being, whose history they affect to commemorate, were merely a lay figure created for the purpose of carrying finery

and advertising the product of the Court milliner."

"Not altogether," said Frank, laughing. "The coach-maker has his share in the puff. It is generally announced, that this bundle of bedizened drapery was carried about in a yellow chariot, which was built by Mr. So and So of Long Acre, and launched last birth-day."

"Hold your tongue, Frank. I am quite angry with you, Mary," said the old lady. "I am sure things cannot be better than they are. These beautiful dresses would not be worn unless gentlemen admired them; and they do admire them, and admire us who wear them. Don't they, Frank?" and the old dame nodded gaily to her godson.

Frank bowed with the gallantry which such a question required.

"There now, Mary," said Lady Carpenter,

"You see I am right. What would you have more?"

"What would I have more than admiration?" said Mary. "I would have respect."

"Good heavens, Miss Staunton!" said Frank, "who denies it you."

"You yourself, Mr. Delamere," said she, as she held up her finger. "I will convict you out of your own mouth. You say women should be satisfied with being idolised. We do not respect idols; we only worship them."

"It is a gallant faith, at least," said Frank, "and one which has been handed down to me with the chivalry of my race."

"And therein the chivalry of your race, like all chivalry, has done much mischief. Its first acts, which freed my sex from bondage were excellent. Its last, which has converted them into goddesses, evil."

"What would you have them then?"

"What Providence intended them to be; neither slaves nor divinities, but human beings with duties to perform; beings created to be to their fellow men, what our great foremother was to Adam, neither their superiors, nor their inferiors, but their equals, their helpmates, their companion."

"My dear Mary," said Lady Carpenter, "you are becoming extravagant. They are so."

"Pardon me. In the higher classes at least, they are nothing of the sort."

"And what prevents their being so?"

"Their want of education."

"Good heavens, Miss Staunton!" said Frank Delamere, "you do not deny that the higher classes are educated, and even if defectively so, that still they are better educated than the lower."

"I acknowledge neither proposition, if you interpret education according to its just meaning."

"And what may that be?"

"Teaching that to the child which is valuable to the man."

"My dear Mary," said the old lady, getting impatient, "you are positively unintelligible."

"I will endeavour to make myself understood. Education is a term of comparison, and it is good or bad, not in proportion to the knowledge it bestows, but in proportion to the value of that knowledge to the individual who receives it, and to his class. A butcher's wife is, comparatively speaking, well educated; for upon all matters connected with the topics in which her husband is interested, or with his profession, she is as versant as himself. She is thus competent

to be his companion, and her presence by his fireside gives him society. It is not so with women of the higher classes. They play a little music—they pencil a little drawing—they work a little tent stitch, and they have an accurate insight into the last fashions, and the price of the newest ribbons. But they have not a tenth part of the information of their husbands, and know nothing of the more important subjects in which he takes an interest. Before marriage, the hypocrisies of society conceal all this, but in a few months the Benedict discovers that the doll who bears his name is in mind at least a blank. In search of more kindred intellect, he betakes himself to Boodle's or to White's, and the lady, if she be domestic, falls back upon the only companionship for which she is fitted, that of her waiting maid."

"This is dreadful! This is shocking, my

dear Mary," said Lady Carpenter. "But supposing it were true, how would you change it?"

"By educating women like men. In the first instance, there is little difference in the minds of the two sexes, and as in the middle and higher classes women have no professions, they have ten times men's leisure for their improvement and the proportionate means of acquiring greater, or at least equal intelligence."

There was a pause of a minute. The subject was getting a little beyond Lady Carpenter, and she turned to her godson for aid.

"And what Frank do you say to all this?"

"That no one," replied her godson, gallantly, "who has the pleasure of listening to Miss Staunton can doubt the value of education in a woman, and yet—" and Frank coloured and stopped.

Mary observed the sudden pause, and guessed its reason.

"You have a bitter truth upon your lip," said she, "I will pardon the thought only if you express it."

"I was about," said her conscious companion, "to utter the doubt if all this information would not render women pedantic."

"Was that intended to be personal," said Mary gaily, as she held up her finger. "But I will excuse the impoliteness in the error. Pedantry is but a vain desire to hold up to admiration a rare quality, and can only exist where the possession of the quality is a distinction. No woman boasts of a nose, or teeth, or a mouth, for the excellences are universal, and if information were equally general, no woman would have a pride in exhibiting talents which were common to all."

"My dear Mary," said Lady Carpenter, "these are dreadful theories. If women were as you would have them, they would frighten men out of their senses. Men don't like girls wiser than themselves, and I observe that those young ladies are always most admired who talk a great deal of nonsense and are well-dressed."

"As to the first of the good qualities which you enumerate," said Mary, "I suspect it is on my side of the question, for nothing requires more education than to talk good nonsense. It is sense in an epigram. As to your other female excellences, the ribbons, and the laces, and the silk gowns—" and Mary Staunton paused suddenly, and shook her head.

"What my dear girl, do you doubt that men admire fine dress in women."

"I do not deny that. It may be so, but

as for myself, I should be sorry to be selected for a perfection, which my purse or any woman's purse, could at four-and-twenty hours notice procure from St. James's Street."

"You are perfectly unintelligible girl," said Lady Carpenter; "what would you wish, what would you have?"

"I would wish," said Mary "to have a better hold upon my husband's affections, than the mere shape of my dress or the colour of my ribbon. I should wish to make him feel that whatever was his profession, I had not merely affection to enable me to sympathize in his success, but education enough to enable me to comprehend its causes. If I were the wife of an author, I should follow with him eagerly the progress of his book. If I were the wife of a public man or public speaker, I should watch anxiously the deve-

lopement of his ideas, as well as share his triumph; I should endeavour to convince him that I was not only able to love, but to appreciate him; I should strive in short to be to him the wife that Madame Villette was to Lord Bolingbroke."

"And who was Madame Villette?"

"She was the niece of Madame de Maintenon and married Bolingbroke in his exile. When the ceremony was over, she said to him words which appear to me to contain within themselves the germ of all domestic felicity: 'You have made me your wife, make me also your friend.' Ah! my dear Lady Carpenter, such a woman was worthy to be the wife of a great statesman; nay more, such a woman, with her talents and devotedness and ambition, would have made her husband a great statesman, even if he had not been Bolingbroke."

Mary had been carried away by her enthusiasm, and it was only upon finding Frank's eyes fixed upon her earnestly, that she became aware of the warmth with which she had been speaking upon a subject, which conventionality has for the most part forbidden to spinster lips. She coloured deeply, became suddenly silent and resumed her knitting. Lady Carpenter too, rather alarmed at such a heterodox expression of opinion, thought it most prudent also to drop the conversation.

As for Frank, he watched intently for a minute the profile of the beautiful face before him, as if he would have read the thought that had dyed its cheek with crimson. He then took a volume from a table near him, opened it, laid it upon his knee, and seemed to give himself up to his studies. Apparently he did not make much progress, for Lady Carpenter on crossing the room some quarter

of an hour afterwards, chanced to look over his shoulder and exclaimed in a voice of inexpressible astonishment:

"My dear boy, do you read with the book upside down?"

It would have been better for the glories of the house of Delamere, if Frank had remained at the billiard-table.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE IN THE BLOOM.

"Is it possible that on so little acquaintance you should like her."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

In the meantime, the days passed rapidly by. It had been Frank Delamere's intention, as, on the night of his arrival he lounged in his room preparatory to getting quit of his raiment, and pondered over the events of the preceding four hours, to have made his visit to his godmother as short as possible. It would be easy, he felt, to atone for the neglect by promising a return

to the Hermitage after a short interval. But even if the abrupt termination of his visit did give offence to his worthy hostess, he felt it would be a less heavy penalty to incur her wrath, than to remain longer in a mansion which contained so disagreeable an inmate as Miss Staunton.

Weeks had passed away since he had formed this doughty resolution, and he was still at the Hermitage. True, he every night as he deposited his person in his dressing-gown and slippers in the high-backed chair which formed the companion to his bed-chamber's fireside, determined that the next day should finish his visit. But there was still each morning discovered some fresh reason for another twenty-four hours' delay. There was some ruin in the neighbourhood which he wished to show to Miss Staunton—some baronial pile or

Elizabethan hall, whose histories were curious, and which Frank (for to confess the truth he was rather vain of his mediæval lore) was anxious to explain to her—some sylvan scene whose beautiful combinations of wood and water formed a worthy subject for Miss Staunton's pencil. Alas! it is easy to find excuses when we seek for them. Whatsoever were the reasons, Frank went not. Each morning found him by Mary's side, and each evening while Lady Carpenter took her doze in the chair, the young couple were left to discuss philosophy after their own fashion.

An event, however, was shortly to occur which, for some days, at least, had the effect of chilling the rapidly increasing intimacy. One evening Frank and Mary chanced to be in the shrubbery. They were examining some roses, and the nook

which the little floral paradise occupied, was screened from the rest of the garden by a thick and lofty hedge of privet. On its other side, passed two of the establishment in solemn conference, and the opinions of the speakers were given without reserve, for Frank and his companion had been silent, and their neighbourhood was unknown and unsuspected.

"No, no, Betsy," said one of the fair conversationists, "I won't be doing nothing so extravagant, as laying out nine and four pence on that gown. I don't deny but what it's most beautiful, with its lovely yellow ground and them red roses on it, as big and as natural as cabbages. But it's as sure as eggs is eggs, that the young Squire and Miss Mary is going to make a match of it, and then I knows as how we shall all have silk dresses a piece."

The Venuses of the servant's hall passed on. Like Audry, the Gods might not have made Miss Betsy's friend poetical, but they had given to her words a power beyond that posessed by most poetry. They had thrilled her auditors. For a moment the young couple stood as if paralysed, and then in silence, and as if by a common impulse, made their way home.

The great dramatist has said that Macbeth had murdered sleep, but the talent was one in which, on the evening in question, Mary seemed to have rivalled the slayer of the King of Scots. It was in vain that Lady Carpenter after tea settled herself snugly in her arm-chair. It was in vain that she put her accustomed hassock under her stout, stumpy legs, so as to give them the angle best calculated to promote placid slumber. The usually self-possessed Mary seemed

nervous and excited, and as if she had been alarmed at the thought of losing the protection of Lady Carpenter's closing orbits, she exerted herself effectually to keep them open. She playfully pinched her hostess's elbow, she tied and untied a dozen times the ribbons of the old lady's cap, under pretence of arranging it more gracefully. She hung over the back of her chair. She whispered a thousand silly nothings in her ear.

All this was strange; but what was still more so, she seemed to have lost her taste for literature and discussion; and avoided the heir of the Delameres as carefully as if he had just been tabooed by some Lazaretto keeper, as uncontestably under the influence of the plague.

Frank too made no effort to renew their former intimacy. On the contrary, he had

retired to the sanctum of the bay window, and occupied himself in studying with the most zealous attention, an article in the Farmers' Magazine, on the surpassing merits of a newly-invented drill plough.

Alas for Frank and Mary! They had become, for the first time, conscious that the world may occasionally be right, and that daily and hourly discussions upon works, literary and philosophical, do not always lead to philosophy.

For a day or two they kept aloof from each other. Their afternoon strolls in the park were tacitly given up. Their very rides were abandoned, as if doubts had been all at once entertained of the efficiency of the chaperoneship even of the venerable and virtuous Timothy.

But this could not last long. Society, natural and necessary to all, is most so to the

young; and Frank Delamere and Miss Staunton, gay and open-hearted, and with tastes and minds, though they believed it not, in strong sympathy with each other, became gradually as before.

This was the more easy, as there was no third person to remark their coldness or its absence. Lady Carpenter was the best little woman in the world, but she never saw beneath the surface. She had at their first meeting, as we have already mentioned, come to the painful conclusion, that her godson and her dear deceased friend's daughter had a strong dislike to each other; and everything that occurred since, had only served to give strength to the original idea. From the same want of powers of observation and deduction, the coldness which had sprung up between her guests, and the sudden cessation of their rides were likewise unremarked.

Frank Delamere asked Miss Staunton regularly as before to take wine with him during dinner, and Miss Staunton as regularly graciously assented. This, had duly attracted the attention of their hostess, for in her own house especially, she was zealous as to the performance of the minute courtesies of life; but she remarked nothing more. The stolen glance—the half spoken sentence—the intonation of the voice, which gives to language an import very different from that which the words seemingly bear—the standing together by the fire—the little *tête-à-têtes* in the bay window—the presentation of flowers—the anxiety to teach or to learn their language—the explanation of the speaker's feelings under the veil of explaining the feelings of those who in more poetic lands use the eloquent symbol; these and the thousand such like fashions in which young

love speaks and is answered, all might be or might not be, they were alike unnoticed by the excellent old lady. For couples who loved quiet flirting, what a delightful mistress of a house was Lady Carpenter.

And yet with all this, neither of her guests knew their own feelings. Mary was not in love with Frank Delamere ; she had merely lost with regard to him a portion of her prejudice. She had learned during their short intercourse, that he was honest, kind-hearted, high-spirited and well-informed. True these were great virtues; but as yet they had produced no fruit. He was apathetic, and his apathy was like to let his higher faculties rot unexercised in the bud. He was extravagantly vain of being Mr. Delamere of Delamere, and believing as he did honestly, that there was no more enviable position than that of the representative

of a great ancestral name, he wanted the stimulus necessary to make men toil for higher honours.

If Mary then thought him an agreeable and talented companion, the very talent brought with it something of contempt, for to her judgement it was associated with an indolence that threatened to make it unproductive. There was thus some liking towards her new acquaintance, but there was no love.

Of Frank's sentiments it would be more difficult to speak. They were confused and contradictory. He too, thought his present associate a most agreeable companion, but the feelings which even she produced, were not altogether pleasureable. From his childhood he had been brought up in Delamere Court in the full conviction—a conviction, with the exception of his mother,

impressed on him by every one from his grandfather to his nurse—that there were few greater personages on earth, than the heir of such a name. The dream was an agreeable one, and he did not feel altogether grateful to her who had awoke him from it. Had Mary been other than she was, he would have listened with horror to the heresy, and looked with anger on its apostle. But Miss Staunton was so frank, so beautiful, so well informed, and so right minded, that he could not help feeling disposed to doubt the importance of a possession, whose value she disputed. He did not believe in the possibility of his falling in love with Miss Staunton. The idea of marrying a person with opinions so different to his own, was absurd; and yet he lingered on, without aim or object, every night forming the resolution to depart, only to see another

day pass over his head, spent—in listening to her voice—in marking the graceful motions of her figure—in acknowledging to himself even while he affected to dispute them, the justness of her views—the brilliancy of her accomplishments, and her language.

But beyond this silent admiration of his companion, he had no intention of going. It would be wrong to say that he had formed any resolution on the subject, for the idea of the heir of the far descended house of Delamere, taking for a wife the daughter of James Staunton never entered into his thoughts. But he had forgotten the power of Cupid, king of gods and men, and the little deity, indignant at the contempt offered him, had determined to prove that the heir of Delamere Court, like mightier mortals, was subject to his sway.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PROPOSAL.

"Duncan fleeched, and Duncan prayed,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't."
DUNCAN GREY.

It was about a week after the conference which had taken place between Betsy and her housemaid friend, with regard to the propriety of purchasing or rejecting the dress with the lovely yellow ground so tastefully diversified with red roses as big as cabbages, that about lunch time a servant arrived from Delamere Court with a letter.

The missive was from Mrs. Delamere, and was addressed to Frank. It announced that she had received an intimation from his aunt, Lady Lacy, that she and her daughter were on their way to one of the Northern Spas, and would take Delamere Court in their route. Their arrival was fixed for the following day, and as Mrs. Delamere was anxious that the master of the house should be present to do the honours of his mansion, she requested her son to return in time to receive them.

The letter was read aloud at the lunch table, and was received with a groan by Lady Carpenter. Part of the good dame's melancholy was occasioned by the fact, that she was about to lose the society of her godson to whom she was much attached; but chiefly because she held in holy horror the Lacys, mother and daughter, and felt

satisfied that their offered visit to a house they had not entered for twenty years, could have but one object, that of making Miss Lacy, Mrs. Delamere.

On Frank himself, the intelligence appeared to have a stupefying effect. He had just loaded his plate with a portion of cold game pie, but he seemed suddenly to have lost his appetite, for the tempting viands were removed from the table almost untouched. On Miss Staunton alone, the unexpected intelligence apparently produced no effect. Mary continued the discussion of her cold fowl, as if nothing particular had occurred. It was evident that her philosophy at least, was not discomposed by the approaching absence of Mr. Francis Delamere.

When lunch was over, Lady Carpenter recollected that Frank's return to his home

presented an opportunity—in those days of ill regulated cross country posts—most rare for dispatching a long epistle to Mrs. General Delamere; and as the good dame did not possess the *esprit de billet*, and took a considerable time to compose her effusions, she placed herself, with the air of one who was about to accomplish a great task, at the writing table, in the bay window.

The young couple, in the meantime, moved out of doors, for Mary had put on her bonnet, and Frank, who was standing in the hall as she passed, took up his hat and accompanied her.

After visiting the greenhouse and the shrubberies the young lady and her companion strolled into the park. For in fine weather, turf has always a charm to the foot beyond the most nicely kept and swep pleasure walks, and in the eyes of both

well able as they were to appreciate the picturesque, the alternations of knoll and flat ground, of plain and grove, of light and shade, offered attractions which formed an agreeable exchange for the gloomy monotony of perpetually recurring rhododendrons and Portugal laurels.

For some time they moved on in silence. Mary for the most part allowed Frank to open the conversation, but on the present occasion his usual fluency and joyous temperament appeared to have deserted him.

"So to-morrow," said he at length, "I return to Delamere Court. I doubt much but I shall feel it dull after the agreeable hours I have spent here."

His manner imtimated that for the happiness of these hours he was indebted to his companion, but Miss Staunton did not see, or did not choose to see the compliment.

"You will miss, I dare say," she replied, "the kindness of our good hostess; but you will have Mrs. Delamere to replace her, and then there will be, besides, your aunt and Miss Lacy. Though I have met them often, I do not know them, but I have heard that your cousin is a delightful companion. At Lord Lacy's, to believe the general *on dit*, she is the inspiring spirit of the scene—understands acting charades—and excels every one in *bouts rimes*."

"I don't like charades," said Frank pettishly, "and I detest *bouts rimés*, and though as a relative I am not entitled to criticise Camilla, I may say that I for one was never able to appreciate her talents for companionship."

"And yet folks say she is clever, and I can from my own eyes bear evidence as to her being pretty and lady-like. Mr. Delamere is difficult to please."

"It is possible that Mr. Delamere may be so, but in this, at least, you are not entitled to question his opinion for it is your own. It was but yesterday, the eloquence of Miss Staunton satisfied me that it is not the neighbourhood of two beings, but the sympathy of their feelings, and tastes, and intelligence, which form society."

"Well, well," said Mary, laughing. "In this I confess, Mr. Delamere, you have me at advantage; so I will not contradict myself, and will no longer enlarge on the companionable qualities of Miss Lacy; yet supposing that they did not, and do not exist, you have many resources independent of them."

"And what are they?"

"You are a large landed proprietor, and you have to occupy you alike the duties and the pleasures of the class."

"I am a large landed proprietor, it is true, Miss Staunton, in so far as the extent of my

estate entitles me to the designation, but I am, nevertheless, a very poor man, and the pleasures and the duties of my class are expensive."

"I do not agree with you. They are not always, nor necessarily so. Mr. Delamere may not be able to keep a pack of fox hounds, but he can make himself at least acquainted with every portion of his estate, and he can do even better than attend to the condition of his land, he can attend to the condition of those who live on it."

"It is an ungrateful task."

"It is a necessary one. You hold a feudal possessorship as a great dignity, and there are no great dignities which have not their duties as well as their pleasures."

Frank muttered something, but it was not articulate.

"Nay, in this case the duty would be a

pleasure. Mr. Delamere loves the picturesque, and his superintendence would produce it. The lower orders are as fond of admiration as the higher; and those cottages and gardens on an estate which are the nearest to the Hall, are always the cleanest and the trimmest, simply because they are the oftenest seen and the most frequently praised."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Frank, "the occupation which Miss Staunton recommends is a most proper one, but it is not very dignified."

"I differ from you. The King and our first nobles hold that they do the state good service, when they devote half a life to produce prize pigs, or prize oxen. Do you not think that Mr. Delamere would wing a higher flight, if, by giving neatness to his cottages, and habits of self-respect to

their occupants, he produced a cleanly, contented, and orderly peasant—what I should term, were I Duke of Norfolk, a prize labourer."

"It is in vain to contend with Miss Staunton," said Frank, pettishly, "and the occupations you suggest may possibly employ the day. But then come the long winter evenings."

"And why should they be dull? You have told me the library at Delamere is large and well selected. Use it."

"That reading is heavy work, Miss Staunton."

"Yet fame says that at Christ Church Mr. Delamere read, and to some purpose."

"I had then an object."

"You have one now. You may follow the example of Adalbert of the Iron Hand."

"Adalbert led men in chain mail. The world is changed."

"The world is not changed. Chain mail may have passed away, but the power of the strong mind over the weak one never changes. Men are led now as in the days of William of Normandy."

"And how?"

"With Chatham scarce dead do you ask the question. 'The terrible cornet of horse,' as Walpole called him, was a greater man than Adalbert."

There was a pause for some minutes, and Frank seemed to have taken a sudden passion for daisies, for he stopped, bent down, and commenced pulling off their heads wit great energy. When his floral mania had abated, he again adressed his companion.

"And would you Miss Staunton, counsel me to devote myself to politics and ambition."

"I am not presumptuous enough to counsel Mr. Delamere. I but say, if I were

a man, and not Mary Staunton, I should hold that there were loftier occupations on earth than riding after a fox, or driving a four-in-hand."

Frank winced, for he thought of his greys.

"No, Mr. Delamere," said Mary, speaking rapidly, "I trust I do not offend you by my frankness, but forgive me for saying that the lethargy which you endeavour to represent as inevitable, has its origin not in want of power, but in want of will. You may not be wealthy, but you have employments before you which are not expensive. You ar proud of your ancestors; to me you appear to overrate their excellences, but they had at least one quality calculated to awaken respect. They had energy, perseverance, the determination to succeed, and you who have youth, health, eloquence, if you imitate them in this, may be even more distinguished than they were; for you may direct that energy to

nobler objects. Ah!" said she, standing still and clenching her small white hand, "what a field for ambition. If I were but a man; if I were but Mr. Delamere."

The enthusiasm with which she spoke had brought the colour to her cheek and the sparkle to her eye, and as she stood with compressed lips and dilated nostril, with head thrown back, and her tall and graceful person drawn up to its full height, she might have been mistaken for some Cumæan Sybilin the moment of inspiration.

Frank gazed at her, and from the changing thoughts that passed over his face there seemed to be some strong internal struggle. It was not long lived however.

"Miss Staunton," said he, "you are not a man, you are not Mr. Delamere, but you can be something more — you can be his guardian angel. Nay, listen to me," said he, as she would have turned away, "I pray you

listen to me. From the first moment we met, I have even in spite of myself felt the influence of your mind and your talents. If I am myself apathetic, unstable, changeable in my objects, and unable to select the best course for happiness, yet I am at least able to appreciate excellence in others, and to acknowledge the justness of your judgment and the loftiness of your aspirations; you have told me that I had the talents and eloquence necessary for success, will you not by sharing my fortunes supply the only further quality wanting for its attainment, by giving them the support of your more powerful will."

He would have taken Mary's hand, but she withdrew it, and with a calmness of voice and manner, which augured ill for his suit, she said:

"You pain me Mr. Delamere. You give

me great pain; but it is impossible; a union between you and me can never be."

"And why?" said Frank. "What is there in our age or our position to render such a union otherwise than suitable. Ah! I fear," said he, with a sudden burst of jealousy, "some more fortunate individual has already become possessor of your heart. Is it not so?"

"Mr. Delamere," said Mary, drawing herself up haughtily. "That is a question which no man is entitled to ask. And yet," continued she, as if moved by the extreme despondency of Frank's countenance "I will answer it, for I take blame to myself, that I have probably, by my too great frankness induced this unfortunate avowal. No, Mr. Delamere, no prior preference has led to your rejection."

"In what then," said Frank, "have I had the misfortune to offend you?"

"You have not offended me, Mr. Delamere, but you forget that in the formation of so solemn a union, there should be better cause than mere absence of dislike."

"And what may be that cause?" said Frank. "I know Miss Staunton, that I am not entitled to ask the question. I know that I have no right, not a shadow of a right to a reply, but Miss Staunton is so frank, so straightforward, so honest, that I take the liberty of hoping that even in this she will answer me."

Mary's cheek grew flushed, and pale by turns, and there was a pause for a minute, as if she were doubtful how to act. At length she said:

"I will answer you, Mr. Delamere, though my answer may give you pain. I have ever held that when a woman marries, she ought to look up to her husband and respect him."

"And what is there in my character," said Frank, "that makes such a feeling impossible?"

"Nothing morally perhaps, and yet much. Forgive me for saying so, and if my answer distress you, recollect that it was you who asked for the answer. You have talents and eloquence. How have you employed them? Either by neglecting them altogether or frittering them away upon unworthy objects. Should I ever marry, I will, and I must, marry a man to whom I can look up; I must respect alike the ends at which he aims, and the steadiness of purpose which would eventually give his aim success. Pardon me for saying so, but you have neither quality."

"And yet," said poor Frank, catching like a drowning man at a straw, "if you were to be my wife, I might, by the benefit of your superintending influence, obtain both."

"No union, Mr. Delamere, could be happy on such terms. You would make yourself my pupil; and you forget that to a pupil the master gives protection and not respect. Such a union is in opposition to every natural law. A wife should appreciate her husband's qualities, but the appreciation should ever be connected with the feeling, that in moral energy as in mental habits he is at least her equal, if not her superior. But we have already continued this painful subject too long, and I have confidence enough in the gentlemanly feelings of Mr. Delamere to believe that he will not, in opposition to my wishes, renew it. I have spoken, perhaps, more frankly than I ought to have done, but if I have offended I trust Mr. Delamere will remember it was from an anxiety to show by my frankness that I was not unworthy of the honour he has paid me. But here we part, and yet not in anger.

Come," said she, "will you not shake hands with me?"

As she spoke, her fair fingers were extended towards him.

Frank stood motionless for a minute, as if, like a petted child, he would have refused the proffered boon. Suddenly he pressed Miss Staunton's hand to his lips. In another instant Mary had opened the shrubbery gate and had disappeared.

Some five minutes after, the clatter of the feet of a horse at speed was heard to issue from the stable yard. Ere it had well died away, the powdered-headed Major-domo made his appearance in the drawing-room, and announced to the astonished Lady Carpenter that her godson had thought fit to depart for Delamere Court, for the purpose of making instant preparations for the reception of his unexpected visitors.

CHAPTER XV.

A SUCCESSFUL STATESMAN.

"True politicians only pay
For solid work, but not for play.
At table you can Horace quote;
They at a pinch can bribe a vote.
You show your skill in Grecian story,
But they can manage Whig and Tory."

SWIFT.

THE Lacys were a specimen of a no uncommon class in the early part of the nineteenth century. A long period of war had produced heavy taxation and extravagant expenditure, and as, through the plentiful existence of rotten boroughs, the minister was always able to command a majority, pro-

vided he were sufficiently subservient to the oligarchy of great nobles who were the masters of the kingdom, there was nothing to check the plentiful crop of corruption, which necessarily sprung up luxuriantly in a soil so well calculated to nourish it. But as the magnates of the aristocracy, who during the reign of the three first princes of the House of Hanover dictated alike to king and country, while they possessed the power over the political machinery, were unwilling to submit to the daily and hourly labour of working it, there sprung up in the political world in England, what in the agricultural world in Ireland are termed "middle-men." In the first instance, for the most part, the low-born *protégés* of their superiors, they acted the modest part of the jackal to the lion, and exhibited themselves as perfectly satisfied with that portion of the public prey which was either too insignificant to tempt the appetite of the

mightier beast, or which was relinquished to them when his hunger was satisfied. But an acquaintance with the affairs of political departments cannot be acquired in a day. Men like Chatham might possess an inborn knowledge of the abstract truths of political wisdom, but to apply them justly, or safely, amid the complication of a hundred treaties formed in their own or preceding administrations—to retain in mind hopes held out or positive pledges given—to keep before their eyes distinctly in short, the thousand minutiæ required in the transaction of state affairs, they were dependant upon a cliquc—a clique which without capacity itself to imagine or carry out important schemes of national policy, was still able when it chose, by affected ignorance or concealed information, convenient absences of memory, and the thousand little chicaneries of office, to clog efficiently the wheels of the political

machine. Thus strong in their familiarity with a thousand routine forms (which though minute were still essential, and which could only be mechanically acquired by the labour of successive years), the underlings of the government holding from state necessity their posts during the changes of all administrations, gradually attained a power which made them indispensable.

Again and again new leaders came into office, each in his turn determined to shake off an influence which cramped his efforts. It was in vain. The parasitical plants kept their hold; and the mighty oak, the massiness of whose stem and the spread of whose branches seemed to intimate colossal vigour, was in spite of itself robbed of sap, and nourishment, and verdure, by the funguses which covered its roots, or the ivy which enveloped it.

These "red tape men," as they were

termed, speedily felt their strength, and used it for their own benefit. Their demands for sinecures, for places, for pensions, for rank were incessant, and as they were always on the spot, and their industry untiring in securing their individual objects, they not unfrequently succeeded in undermining the power of the great aristocratic chiefs, whose indolence or ignorance left them without an acquaintance with the details necessary for carrying on the government, or whose greater wealth made them indifferent about the acquisition of those smaller prizes in the political lottery which were eagerly grasped by their adherents.

Among the most successful of these state leeches had been the first Lord Lacy. Originally a young man without fortune, family, or friends, he had been called to the bar. But his legal efforts had not been successful. There is no place on earth

where patronage does less for a man than in a court of justice. Each suitor employs him whom he believes to be the best advocate, without enquiring whether he was the son of a nobleman or a hair-dresser; and young Lacy, whose talents were by no means brilliant, remained a briefless barrister. He had sense enough to be conscious of his inferiority to his more rising fellows, and after four or five years of disappointed hope, he determined to abandon an ungrateful profession. While thus doubtful of the future, chance threw him in the way of the Duke of Acton. The young Templar had accidentally been one of an election committee to secure Lord Hazleton's return in a county contest. The election was successful. A good deal of the dirty work which had secured its fortunate issue had been done by Mr. Lacy; and his services were brought under the great man's notice. The Duke

was ambitious, but indolent. He wished to add to the political power of the house of Acton, but even in a possessor of the strawberry leaves, the acquisition of political power requires labour. He determined therefore to do by proxy that which he was not disposed to do in person. He felt that it would be convenient to have some one to write for him, to speak for him, to think for him, and it was precisely when the necessity of a mental double pressed itself most prominently on his mind, that the zeal of Mr. Lacy was brought under his notice. In a man of his rank it was dignified to be grateful, and to make the gratitude convenient, he appointed Mr. Lacy his private secretary.

The young adventurer was now in the career for which nature had fitted him. He was naturally supple, smooth-tongued, jesuitical, persevering. To the Duke he made himself acceptable by a great knowledge of

detail. He flattered his political vanity by affecting an extravagant admiration for the house of Acton, by exaggerating its importance, and by suggesting, not directly, but in a thousand sidelong ways, that his Grace, if his Grace chose to wish it, might become prime minister.

Such services met with their reward. The Duke had several pocket boroughs. One of the members, who represented in the lower house the power of his master in the upper, had differed with his patron on a matter of politics. He declined following the line of conduct which had been stereotyped for his use and that of his fellow nominees, and accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. Mr. Lacy felt that the time was come for making a step in the world. He impressed upon his noble patron how necessary it was to the power of the house of Acton, that its representatives in the

Commons should vote as one man, and hinted in the most delicate way, that if he had been the member for Tweedledum, he would not have been affected by the scruples which had been found so inconvenient in the late inmate of St. Stephen's Chapel. The easy-tempered noble caught at the idea, and determined that so accommodating a dependant should not be lost. Mr. Lacy became member for Tweedledum.

Franklin knew human nature well, when he stated, as an abstract fact, that the best method to win a man's good graces was to induce him to do you a favour. The Duke of Acton detested Franklin, but he nevertheless adopted his axiom. He had made Mr. Lacy an M.P. He now asked from the minister a post for his *protégé*. When a man has seven votes at his back, he seldom receives a negative from Downing Street, and Mr. Lacy, to the astonishment of his

friends in Westminster Hall, was gazetted one of the Lords of the Treasury.

The briefless barrister was now on the fair road to perferment, but, strange to say, he was not intoxicated with his success. No one estimated more accurately his mediocrity of intellect. He had risen in the world, but he was well aware that he was indebted for his success solely to the patronage of the illustrious house into which he had forced himself. That patronage had depended upon a favourable opinion of his merits. It might be deemed ill-placed. It might be withdrawn, and with its loss he would become once more the briefless Mr. Lacy. He determined to put himself beyond the reach of such a contingency, and connect himself with his patron by a bond which could not be so easily broken.

Miss Delamere, of Delamere Court, was in London. She was portionless, but she was

the niece of the Duchess; and the young barrister felt that if she could be persuaded to become Mrs. Lacy, his future fortunes would be identified with the house of Acton. He proposed. Miss Delamere was selfish and heartless; but she was shrewd and clear-sighted, and well able to estimate correctly the prospects in life of a very poor, and not very juvenile young lady. She had been several seasons in London without an offer. The match was not first-rate, but it was tolerable. She accepted Mr. Lacy.

The young man's progress now became rapid. The influence of his ducal connection was applied to push him forward, and after ten years official labour, he was, through its aid, and on a split in the Cabinet, made one of the Secretaries of State. It was intended, when he was first elevated to the post, that he should only keep the seat warm for a better man. In time the better man was found,

and it was intimated to, what at the present day would be termed, the transition minister, that he must withdraw. This did not suit Mr. Lacy. He was a true parasite. He had got into possession of a good place and his power of hold was wonderful. He sturdily refused to move.

Poor Sindbad, when the Old Man of the Sea first refused to get off his shoulders, was scarcely more embarrassed then the head of the Cabinet, by Mr. Lacy's negative. The talents of the new place holder were notoriously unequal to the office. The country clamoured against him; the opposition thundered; Perry denounced him in the leading articles of the "Morning Chronicle;" Gilray showed him up in caricatures.

The minister was in despair. If he did turn out his inefficient colleague, he brought into instant opposition, the Duke of Acton and his seven satellites. If he did not turn

him out, he was likely to be compelled, through the violence of popular feeling, to quit Downing Street himself. Never was great statesman more puzzled.

At last the parties came to an understanding. Mr. Lacy consented to resign, but the pill was to be gilded by a peerage, and a sinecure post of five thousand a year. The briefless barrister became Lord Lacy, and the astonishment of Westminster Hall was unbounded.

The political career of the new family was not yet terminated. The noble place holder had a son and a daughter. But there was no wealth to support the title. The sinecure was limited to his own life, and he had neither lands, nor rents, nor funded property, to bequeath to his heir. He determined therefore to quarter him on the country. The means that had supported the father might be made available for supporting also

the son; and George Frederick Augustus Lacy, for with calculating loyalty the child combined in his own nomenclature the christian names of half the house of Guelph, was carefully brought up in a career which his parent had found so profitable. He had been thrust into a lucrative office, connected with the Colonies, and by precept and example was prepared to follow the footsteps of his father.

The boy was provided for. The girl had not been so fortunate in finding an establishment; yet everything had been done that could be done to ensure her success. She had been educated at a first-rate boarding-school, and of course knew nothing. Yet the catalogue of her accomplishments was lengthy. She had studied French, but like Chaucer's nun, her accent smacked more of London than of Paris. She painted, and after five years lessons from Mrs. Pope, had

succeeded in producing a result worthy of the labour; she depicted naturally a drop of water on a rose leaf. But she had given up drawing since she left school, and ill-nature alleged that her talent for the fine arts lost much of its charms from the absence of her instructress. She excelled in embroidery, and had executed in worsted an allegorical work, intended to represent the British lion trampling on the globe; but it had been removed from the drawing-room ever since the unfortunate blunder of Sir Effingham Windham, the Garter King at Arms, who had mistaken it for a French poodle playing with a billiard-ball. And then she had a respectable knowledge of mythology and history. She knew who Venus was. She had once been called a Venus herself—and Cupid—he is a god with whose name even the most ignorant young ladies are acquainted, and Jupiter, and Juno, and Mars. Her his-

torical information had been formed upon an equally approved model. It was always greatest when the knowledge was least worth having. She was aware that Cecrops built Athens; and as in these days Niebuhr had not proved that the sons of Rhea Silvia were poetical creations, she doubted not that Romulus had founded Rome. On the same principle, she was cognisant of the fact that William Rufus was the son of the Duke of Normandy, and Queen Bess the daughter of Henry VIII. But as events approached our own time, and acquaintance with them became more important, her historical knowledge grew proportionately indistinct. She had a confused idea that George I. had a family claim to the British throne, but was entirely puzzled when asked who was the father of George III. Like most boarding-school young ladies, she believed him to have been George II.

Still if upon such points her intelligences were somewhat deficient, she was intimately acquainted with other sciences in which Hume and Gibbon might have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. She had the Red Book at her fingers ends, was well read in the peerage, and better acquainted than Sir Effingham Windham, himself, with the name and probable rent-roll of every unmarried young nobleman above twenty.

Such varied talents had not however met the success they deserved. Miss Lacy was six-and-twenty. She had been introduced at seventeen, and for eight years had been the ornament of half the fashionable parties in London. She was still, nevertheless, Miss Lacy. It was in vain that her mother had done her best to advertise her perfections by pouring into the ears of eligible young men, who were, or ought to have been tired of their bachelor existence, a thousand

eulogiums of her person and disposition. It was in vain that she herself had done her best to second these efforts by becoming as she got older, gayer in her laugh, and more nymph like in her dress. It was in vain, that she even condescended to enchant the youngsters, while she horrified their mammas, by doing, what in those moral days was considered as one of the seven deadly sins—by waltzing. She was still Miss Lacy. Such a want of taste in the male sex, while it excited astonishment both in mother and daughter, produced a serious consultation, and the result was the visit to Delamere Court.

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